

Policies and Procedures for the Research Grants Program

Report of the Special Committee on Research Grants

Robert K. Crocker, Chair

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SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE

RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

REPORT OF THE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH GRANTS

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PREFACE

The Special Committee on the Research Grants program was established by Council in May, 1984, with a mandate to review all previous documentation on the program, to consult those having an interest in the program, and to formulate and give priority to options for its future. Although a number of ad hoc changes had been made to the program over time, there had not been a fundamental review for some years. Meanwhile, the financial and administrative climate within which the program functions had shifted substantially. This was accompanied by increasing concern within the academic community over the future of the program, along with complaints about its functioning. In establishing the Committee, it was Council's belief that the time had come for a definitive debate and for appropriate action to restructure the program.

One of the major tasks of the Committee was to initiate a broad consultation involving individual scholars, scholarly organizations, grants officers and other members of the SSHRC staff, the Advisory Academic Panel and other individuals and organizations. Throughout its own deliberations, the Committee was mindful of the various views expressed and of the need to find a balance between often conflicting viewpoints. At the same time, it recognized that the final decisions would have to be taken by Council and that community opinion was only one of the factors to be considered. The Committee was also concerned with the increasing constraints on the administrative resources of the organization, and with the frequent complaints about administrative rigidity, complexity of procedures, and slowness of response. There was thus a need to ensure that any proposals for change would not result in increased complexity for staff, applicants, or grant holders.

The Committee presented its Report to Council in July, 1985. The Report was adopted by Council, with some minor changes in recommendations. To avoid confusion in issuing a committee report followed by Council's decisions on that report, it was therefore decided to incorporate changes made by Council into the report itself, and to publish a single document representing Council policy. The recommendations which appear in this document may therefore be treated as Council resolutions representing revised policies on the Research Grants program. Aside from deletion of one or two recommendations as redundant and minor changes to others, the only substantive difference between the original Committee report and the present document is that Council reversed the Committee's recommendation that members of adjudication committees be eligible to apply for research grants. In the view of Council, the need to avoid either real or perceived conflict of interest overrides the pragmatic argument that it is difficult to recruit and retain the most highly capable scholars as committee members if they are ineligible to apply.

It is recognized that certain of the directions to be taken by the program are not those that some members of the community would have preferred. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the report contains an adequate rationale for these directions. Some, no doubt, would have desired further consultation on certain recommendations. However, the Committee was satisfied that community views had been well canvassed and that Council could be given a clear picture of likely reaction to its proposals. Where contradictory views have been expressed, some views have to be accepted and others rejected. Overall, Council has concluded that the resolutions form a coherent package

which will lead to substantial improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, while retaining its essential characteristics and addressing many of the constraints which exist.

Certain of the policy resolutions will obviously require further work by management, staff, adjudication committees and others before they can be implemented. It is hoped that this work can proceed with a minimum of disruption to the program. In this connection the Committee was most impressed by the high degree of competence and dedication of its adjudication committees and grants officers. Nothing in the report should be interpreted as implying any criticism of either. To the extent that changes are required, these result from inadequacies in previous policy, and from constraints in the system, rather than from any inability of staff or scholars to fulfill their responsibilities. There is much reason to be confident that the new policies and procedures will be implemented with the same skill and dedication as before.

Completion of a task such as this requires the cooperation of a large number of people. The Committee gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the individual scholars who responded to our survey, the scholarly associations who deliberated on the issues and answered our questions, and the many SSHRC staff members who assisted in numerous ways. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Institute for Educational Research and Development, Memorial University of Newfoundland, for their contributions to the conduct of the survey of scholars and for the many other ways in which they helped ensure that the Committee Chairman had the freedom to carry out this task. Finally, a special debt of gratitude is owed to Noel F.W. Gates, the retiring Director of the Research Grants Division, for acting as secretary to the Committee and for giving us the benefit of his long experience and great depth of knowledge about the program.

I INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The Special Committee on the Research Grants Program had its origins in the Council debate on the Report of the Task Force on Structures and Procedures (Stairs Report). The mandate of the Stairs Task Force was to recommend ways of simplifying and streamlining the procedures by which Council programs are administered. In a cluster of recommendations dealing with the Research Grants program, the Task Force had recommended that the Director of the Division prepare a report on the consequences of implementing a radical restructuring of the program. The impetus for this recommendation was the view that substantial simplification could not be achieved without major changes in the administrative procedures of the program. At the same time, the consequences of such changes could not be predicted by the Stairs Task Force.

In responding to this recommendation, the view of Council was that the Director and his staff had already been asked on several occasions to prepare position papers on this matter, and could scarcely be asked to do further work without having some sense of direction from Council on the basic structure and function of the program. The following resolution was therefore adopted:

26.8.17 That a Council ad hoc committee be struck to review all background documents prepared by the Research Grants Division and others on the questions of assessment and adjudication procedures and of the streamlining of the administrative procedures which might be adopted for the program. This committee . . . would, in addition, have the mandate of drawing up and giving priorities to a number of options for the future of the program . . .

Subsequently, at its meeting in December, 1984, Council requested that the committee add to its mandate a preliminary review of the General Research Grants program (the program of block grants to universities), in light of an evaluation report (McFarlane Report) and subsequent staff recommendations on the restructuring of that program. This assignment was based on the realization that General Research Grants (GRGs) formed part of a continuum of research support, and that proposals to restructure the Research Grants program might well impinge on the GRG Program.

The problem which eluded the Stairs Task Force is a long-standing one, having generated many previous position papers and much Council debate. At its root is what is widely perceived to be a conflict between the requirement of efficiency in administering the Research Grants program and the academic integrity of the program. In the face of increased pressures on Council staff, and increased complexity of program administration caused by ad hoc additions to procedures over the years, a number of proposals have been advanced for improving efficiency. However, these have invariably been perceived by many as severely compromising the academic integrity of the program. Of special concern has been suggestions that increased efficiency might be attained by abandoning one of the most cherished features of the program, that of external peer assessment.

During the course of the committee's work, many have asked why a program which seems stable and enjoys widespread support within the academic community should come under such scrutiny at this time. There are several answers to this question. The first lies in the two levels of accountability of the Council. As well as being accountable to the academic community, the Council, as a public agency, must be responsible to the public, through the federal government, for its use of public funds. This relates to the question of efficiency, in that it would be expected that a granting program would be designed to minimize administrative costs and maximize the resources available for its primary function of awarding research grants. More broadly, accountability to the public implies a concern with the productivity of the program, in terms of outcomes which can be publicly defended. This is necessary to ensure continued willingness on the part of government to grant funds for research purposes. The heavy emphasis in the Research Grants program on adjudication at the proposal stage has, to some degree, been at the expense of examining outcomes of the program. Staff and other resources must be allocated to follow-up and analysis if information is to be made available to help defend the program.

The issue goes beyond public accountability, however. The various proposals on the program which have emerged in recent years have been interpreted by some as part of a "hidden agenda" for change. Although many of these proposals have been in the form of discussion papers, with no particular status as part of an agenda for change, their very existence has been sufficient to reinforce the notion of a hidden agenda. It is obvious that the time has come for Council to make quite clear its intended directions for the program, to avoid further prolonging the concerns within the community as to its future.

A further answer lies in the need for periodic review of any program. Such reviews do not have to be precipitated by any particular problem, but should rather grow out of a broad requirement for systematic updating of programs, and for the avoidance of management by crisis. Substantial shifts have occurred in the climate for research funding and in the disciplines served by the Research Grants program since its last review in 1979. Various more or less ad hoc changes have been made to accommodate these shifts. It is now appropriate that the effect of these changes be examined and that any further changes be made as part of an overall review package.

Finally, it has become increasingly obvious that externally imposed constraints on resources for program administration are becoming more intense. In particular, it is clear that any new initiatives to be undertaken as part of the second Five-Year Plan of the Council will have to be implemented with no new resources for administration. Resources must be redeployed for program development and implementation in other areas of the Council's operation if any part of the new Five-Year Plan is to be carried out. An even more severe constraint has been imposed by a recent Treasury Board directive imposing a reduction of some ten person-years in Council staff over the next five years. It is obvious that the Research Grants program cannot be sheltered from the effects of such reductions.

In its simplest form, the problem before the committee was to develop proposals which will ensure that the program is administered at the minimum cost consistent with maintaining the academic integrity of the decision process. The problem may be approached in two ways. First, an attempt could be made, through

consultation with those concerned, to determine what is perceived as essential for academic integrity, and then Council would deploy whatever level of resources is necessary to attain such integrity. Second, one could begin with the various constraints on the system, in terms of available resources for administration, and attempt to devise a system which is as academically sound as possible, within these constraints.

The difficulty with these two approaches, if looked at independently, is that they lead to extreme solutions. Resources for administration are, and should be, limited, since funds used for this purpose do not produce research. One cannot therefore devise a system which assumes that whatever administrative resources are needed will be available. Conversely, the most economical system to administer may be counterproductive, in that wasted funds may result from failure to make academically sound decisions. An attempt must therefore be made to balance the two requirements. As already mentioned, certain constraints are forced upon us. It was clear from the beginning, for example, that some redeployment of staff among Council programs was required, in order to ensure that programs could be managed and that certain new initiatives could be undertaken if funds became available under the new Five-Year Plan. Originally it was thought that at least the existing total staff complement would be maintained. More recently, however, Council has been faced with a directive to reduce its staff by nearly ten per cent over the next five years, as part of a general restraint program of the federal government. The reality of such reductions must be taken into account in developing administrative policies and procedures for any of the Council's programs.

At the outset, it was thought that the committee would confine itself to reviewing administrative options already prepared, and deliberating on a number of specific questions of administration. Committees of this sort, however, tend not to be content with focusing on narrow issues but, instead, attempt to trace these issues to their fundamental sources. In this case, the basic questions concern: the proper function of a federal granting agency; the responsibility of the agency to both the public and the academic community; the objectives of a Research Grants program; and the politics of administering a program for a large, diverse, and independent-minded clientele, many of whose members have little sympathy for what they see as the bureaucratic concerns of program administrators.

As usual, a mature program such as the Research Grants program is accompanied by a large body of conventional wisdom, and not a few myths, about its functioning. The committee saw its task as probing beyond the conventional wisdom, and analyzing some of the controversies surrounding various proposals for changes in the program. The committee also saw it as its function to obtain as comprehensive a reading as possible of the views of the academic community, and to understand as far as possible the various positions on changes in the program.

Some of the specific questions addressed by the committee were as follows:

1. What should be the objectives of a Research Grants program, and to what extent are these consonant with existing objectives and practices?

2. What is the proper function of peer assessment, and what type of assessment and adjudication system best meets the requirements of academically sound and administratively efficient decision-making?
3. What should be the relative balance between emphasis on the project or the scholarly record of the individual applicant in adjudicating applications for research grants?
4. Are there important differences between disciplines in their requirements for research support, and how should any such differences be accommodated?
5. What should be the relative balance between supporting short-term versus long-term research in the program?
6. Should the practice of awarding research time stipends be reinstated for full-time university scholars, and, if so, under what conditions?
7. How severe are the administrative constraints within Council, and how far is it necessary to go in accomodating these constraints? Further, what kinds of tasks are not now being performed within the program because of constraints, and are these tasks sufficiently important to require changes?
8. What requirements should exist for ensuring accountability of grant holders for the use of public funds? Conversely, what degree of flexibility should be allowed the recipient to accommodate necessary changes in research requirements?
9. What reporting requirements are necessary to ensure Council is sufficiently aware of the products of research conducted under its grants and to allow for program evaluation?
10. Should there be some provision for appeals of decisions, and what form should this take?
11. Should funding envelopes be allocated for disciplines, and how should such allocations be made?
12. What should be the relationship between the Research Grants program and the program of General Research Grants to universities, and how should funds be allocated under the latter program?

Historical Perspective

It is widely agreed that the Research Grants program has been one of the core programs of the SSHRC and its predecessor, the Humanities and Social Sciences Division of the Canada Council. The program emerged in 1965, when the original endowment of the Canada Council began to be supplemented by relatively large annual parliamentary appropriations. Before that time, the Canada Council

had supported a small program of research grants administered by the Humanities Research Council and the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada (now the Canadian Federation for the Humanities, and the Social Sciences Federation of Canada, respectively).

Beginning with the new appropriations, Canada Council established its own mechanism for administration. External peer assessment was part of the system from the beginning, following the pattern established by other granting agencies. In the early stages, staff members were authorized to approve grants up to a certain level, on the basis of written assessments. Beyond this level, an Advisory Academic Panel functioned essentially as an adjudication committee. The option of using small juries of specialists was considered part of the program from the beginning, but was apparently not put into operation by the Canada Council. Until quite recently, the program was non-competitive, in that sufficient funds were available to support all projects found to be of scholarly merit. As time passed, additional features were added to the model, as the size of the program increased and as pressure for funds became more intense. In general, little thought seems to have been given to the cumulative effects of these changes until the program was absorbed in 1978 by the newly formed Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

One of the earliest acts of the new Council was to commission a review of the Research Grants program. The consultant, Donald Caskie, examined the granting practices of other agencies, reviewed the development of the program up to that time, interviewed staff, and conducted a survey of recent grant holders. The major outcome of the Caskie study was the establishment of the current system of adjudication committees (Caskie envisaged six such committees; the number has since grown to thirteen). Caskie also proposed retaining the system of external peer assessment and the emphasis on project rather than person. The major function of the committees, in Caskie's view, was to reduce staff workload and to ensure that decision-making was in the hands of scholars at all stages. However, the possibility of a competition, and the need for committee ranking of proposals was also foreseen by the consultant.

A further feature of the Caskie model was retention of the Advisory Academic Panel as a review body of last resort and as a forum for policy discussion on the program. The Panel did, indeed, act as a review committee for difficult cases for a short time, but this was discontinued upon the introduction of a competition. The idea of the Panel as an instrument for policy discussions on matters relating to program adjudication has, however, been continued. The Caskie report also contained several other recommendations, including improved communication with the academic community, placing greater responsibility on the applicant to produce the required documentation, limits on the length of proposals, abandoning post-submission revision and supplementary funding, and eliminating the distinction between standard and extended grants (the report favoured greater emphasis on long-term support).

In terms of economy and efficiency of administration, Caskie estimated that a reduction of staff from 23 to 14 person-years could be accomplished by implementing his recommendations. In fact, although most of these proposals were, indeed, implemented, the program has taken on additional features (such as competition, increase in number of applications, additional adjudication committees) which have resulted in much smaller net savings in staff time than estimated. The program currently functions with a staff complement of just over 19 person-years.

The more recent history of the program may be described as one of changes dictated by circumstances, accompanied by increasing concern by Council and management over the efficiency of the program, and increased fears in the academic community that changes are being contemplated which would be detrimental to its integrity. A number of staff papers have been prepared, which have engendered substantial Panel and Council debate. The following is a summary of the major events of the past five years or so:

1. Introduction of research time stipends (1980) and suspension (1982) because demand had quickly outstripped available resources.
2. Consideration by the Panel's Research Support Committee and the Panel of a number of matters stemming from demand (1982). Among these were the introduction of a competition, establishment of a small grants category with no external assessment, allocation of committee envelopes, and relaxing of budgetary controls.
3. Presentation to Council of a major paper prepared by the Director of the Research Grants Division on the above matters (1982).
4. Introduction of a competition (1982), accompanied by a system of allocation of financial envelopes among committees, designed to achieve a uniform dollar success rate across disciplines.
5. Report of the Directors' Committee to the Stairs Task Force (1983) emphasizing that the Research Grants Division could not continue to function under current requirements for obtaining external assessments for all proposals. Following the outline of a number of options, the Directors recommended that person-based adjudication, with no external assessments, be implemented for all applications under \$50,000, and that the separate major research grants category be abolished.
6. Submission of the Stairs report (1984). This report acknowledged that the Research Grants program presented this organization with its most intractable set of problems. Two possible courses of action were suggested. The "radical" option would be a course of action similar to that proposed by the Directors' Committee, and would involve abandoning two of the most firmly held tenets of the program, that of project-based assessment and the use of external peer reviewers. The alternative, more conservative, option would be to make certain incremental changes in the system, without questioning its basic structure. The recommendation of the Stairs Task Force that the director of the Division prepare yet another staff paper on the subject precipitated the Council debate which culminated in establishment of this committee.

A number of events which have occurred at the operational level in recent years are perhaps worth mentioning here. In general, the transition to a competition appears to have taken place without major repercussions. On one

occasion, however, it was impossible to complete the adjudications by the expected date, resulting in delays in notification of results to applicants. The number of applications has stabilized or decreased slightly since the suspension of research time stipends (although it is not clear that this has been the cause). Success rates, which had declined to less than 30 per cent in dollar terms have climbed back to near 50 per cent. The perception is that committees have become more stringent in their attention to budgets and more reluctant to build up forward commitments by approving multi-year grants. There has been some relaxation of budgetary controls on grant holders, but this seems not to have been communicated effectively, as applicants continue to request permission to make minor changes to budget items. Finally, there has been a reduction of one person-year in the Division, as the position of Assistant Director has been eliminated. In general, there does not appear to be the same sense of crisis in the Division as there was a few years ago.

Current Status of the Program

The major features of the current program are no doubt apparent from the previous discussion. In attempting to summarize these features, the approach is taken of tracing an application from its initiation by the researcher through to its final disposal and the closing of the file. A series of stages in the process are readily identifiable:

1. The program is essentially a reactive one, in which the initiative to submit a proposal comes from the researcher. A Guide for Applicants is available, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to prepare a proposal in accordance with the terms of the Guide.
2. Applications are received twice a year, on May 15 and October 15. Following routine processing, applications are assigned to one of about ten grants officers, depending on the discipline.
3. It is the initial responsibility of the officer to select appropriate external assessors. This is done by consulting assessor files developed by the officers themselves, and by consulting other sources as necessary. It is important to note that assessors are matched to individual applications. Officers must therefore become quite familiar with the content of each proposal. A minimum of two to three assessments is required for each application. In practice officers select more than the minimum number of assessors to compensate for refusals and non-responses. It is estimated that each officer must contact two to three hundred assessors for each competition. This is obviously a time-consuming procedure. It is thus not surprising that this has become the focus of various attempts to make the process more efficient.
4. Once assessments have been received, files are prepared for the adjudication committees, which meet once for each competition. The committees have several functions, including judging the quality of assessments, ranking applications, scrutinizing budgets, and finally recommending awards, based on pre-defined budget envelopes. There are now thirteen committees, some representing a single discipline, and others representing a cluster of disciplines.

5. The budget envelopes are calculated on the basis of a ratio of total demand to total funds available, and are apportioned to committees by demand within the discipline. This gives a uniform dollar success rate across committees, subject only to possible reallocations if some committees fail to use their entire envelopes. However, the specific funding pattern (long- versus short-term, large versus small projects and the like) varies from one committee to another. Committees can underspend their envelopes if the quality of applications is not judged sufficiently high but cannot overspend, although on occasion supplementary lists of candidates may be prepared.
6. Once the round of adjudications is complete, applicants are notified of success or failure, and of any conditions applicable to the grant. Applicants also receive assessors' comments.
7. There are no provisions for appeal of committee decisions, although submission of revised proposals is possible.
8. In general, grant holders are expected to carry out the project as defined. Major changes in research plans require prior approval. However, substantial leeway is now given in budget reallocations among various categories.
9. Awards are administered by the grantee's university (except in the case of private scholars). A project report and a financial statement are required before the file on a project is closed. In practice, little attention is paid to the substantive content of a final report and no assessment is made of the report, except that reports become part of the applicant's file, and may be used in judging subsequent applications. In general, scholars are expected to inform the Council about publications or other products of their work.

One or two additional points are worth noting. Once a decision is made to fund a particular project, the adjudication committee must also determine the amount of the award. The operating principle is to provide "essential funding". That is, an applicant is awarded a sum which is judged by the committee as essential for the proper conduct of the project. There are thus no arbitrary or across the board budget reductions to increase success rates, even when funds are severely restricted. Also, the primary basis for assessment is the project as proposed. The scholarly record of the applicant is one of several other criteria used, but is not a primary consideration. Finally, it is worth reiterating that the process is now a competitive one, in which applications must be ranked, thus opening the possibility that some meritorious applications will be rejected for lack of funds.

Activities of the Committee

From the beginning, it was decided that one of the major tasks of this committee would be to initiate a broad consultation within the academic community. Although there was some sense of the views of the community on certain issues before the committee, it was felt that the views normally

expressed are those of a particular segment of the community consisting of those who are participants in some way in the process, or who hold leadership positions in certain organizations having regular access to Council. While such views are obviously important, there remains a question of how well they represent the broader community of scholars.

Clearly the issues at hand are considered to be of substantial importance to scholars. Equally clearly, it is difficult for the Council to embark on major changes without the support of the community, or at least without knowledge of the likely reaction in the community. Accordingly, the committee undertook a number of tasks designed to assess community reaction. First, a letter was sent to the organizations and groups normally consulted on such matters, including the federations, AUCC, CAGS, CAURA, CAUT and so on. These groups were asked to comment on a number of specific questions posed by the committee. A similar letter was sent to all scholarly associations receiving support under the Aid to Scholarly Associations Program. These letters appear to have received fairly wide distribution as some 80 responses were received, some from individual members as well as from official representatives of the various societies. Comprehensive briefs were also received from the Social Sciences Federation of Canada and the Canadian Federation for the Humanities.

Scheduling difficulties prevented a full-scale consultation with all adjudication committees or their chairs. It was possible, however, to hold a substantial discussion with the reconstituted Advisory Academic Panel, whose membership now consists of chairpersons of adjudication committees from the various Council programs. Also, a number of adjudication committees did find time during their regular meetings in March, 1985, to comment on the issues before the committee. Similarly, several committee chairpersons either responded to the letter to societies or wrote to the committee independently. Further information on committee views emerged from interviews with grants officers. On the whole, therefore, the committee is satisfied that it was able to obtain a reasonably comprehensive picture of the position of adjudication committees. The views of the grants officers were sought through a meeting at the beginning of the committee's work and through individual interviews with each officer following the Spring, 1985, round of adjudications. The position of the officers was also documented in staff papers and in submissions and responses to the Stairs Task Force.

The broadest attempt at consultation consisted of a survey questionnaire sent to a sample of individual scholars in the disciplines supported by Council. This survey yielded some 700 responses. The major purpose of the survey was to ensure that information was available from both participants and non-participants in SSHRC programs, within the relevant disciplines. A second purpose was to check on the representativeness of views coming from the inevitably select groups normally involved in consultations of this sort. A separate report on the survey has been prepared, and only a brief summary of the results is given in this report.

While consultation is important, the committee recognized that policy cannot be made on the basis of client opinion alone. In fact, the major dilemma facing the committee was that the trend in opinion was strongly against certain proposals for change which had been suggested in various earlier documents and discussions. As already suggested, these proposals, no matter how tentative, had, in the eyes of some, taken on the status of a hidden agenda for change.

Needless to say, this committee did not begin its work with any presuppositions about the nature of the changes required. Nonetheless, it recognized that some change would obviously be needed to accommodate emerging realities and to allow some scope for Council to pursue other objectives.

The major part of the committee's own deliberations was concerned with finding ways to change which would meet the requirements for effective and efficient management of the program, while maintaining an academically defensible decision system and avoiding serious damage to the Council's image and acceptance in the scholarly community. We return to a discussion of these deliberations in Chapter 3. First, however, we present a summary of the views expressed by the various individuals and groups consulted.

II PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROGRAM

This chapter outlines the opinions expressed by the various groups and individuals consulted by the committee. The major part of the chapter is devoted to a summary of the views expressed by the individual scholars and organizations surveyed. In discussing these views, the two sources of data are taken together, and organized under headings corresponding to the questions asked. In addition, the views of staff members in the Research Grants Division and of senior management of the Council are also summarized.

In the interest of brevity, a complete analysis of responses to the survey of scholars is not presented here, but appears as a separate background report. Readers are referred to that report for details of sampling procedures, characteristics of the respondents, response rates, and sampling errors, as well as for an item by item tabulation of responses.

Funding Sources in the Humanities and Social Sciences

The question of where, aside from the SSHRC, scholars in the humanities social sciences receive their funding has been the subject of some speculation, and of at least one empirical study (Adair and Davidson, 1984). The issue is of interest because participation rates in Council programs are relatively low in relation to the size of the community served, as compared to our sister councils. There are a number of possible reasons for this, one of which is the possible availability of funds from other sources. It has been speculated that the professional disciplines, in particular, have access to funds for consulting and contract work which reduces the effective demand for SSHRC funding. The Adair and Davidson study (which was commissioned by the SSHRC) was confined to the social sciences and therefore does not present a broad picture of the pattern of funding across all disciplines. Nevertheless, the findings of that study are reasonably in accord with the results of our own survey.

While our survey did not attempt a complete analysis of other sources of funding, a number of items did address the question of respondents' grant history from the SSHRC and other sources. The most striking result was that a far larger proportion of respondents indicated that they received funds from internal university sources rather than from any other source (74 per cent had received university funding, while only 24 per cent had received support from federal granting agencies, the next largest source). A larger proportion also indicated that the university, rather than any external source, was their principal means of support (31 per cent for universities versus 13 per cent for federal granting agencies). While this cannot be expressed in terms of relative dollar contributions, there is little doubt, especially when indirect contributions are considered, that the internal resources of the universities are by far the largest source of funding for the humanities and social sciences.

Beyond this, reasonably large proportions of respondents (in the 20 per cent range for each source) indicated that they had received support from a variety of external sources, federal, provincial, and private, other than the SSHRC. In all, more than 60 per cent of respondents reported having received some form of external funding. While this may reflect some bias in response rates favouring those with a grant history, the data do indicate the availability of a substantial amount of research support outside of this agency.

Some 17 per cent of respondents reported that they now hold grants from the SSHRC, while just over 50 per cent indicated that they had held grants from the SSHRC in the past. Considering the number of awards in each competition, and the existence of multi-year and multi-researcher awards, the 17 per cent figure for current grant holders appears realistic. This also lends credibility to the figure for sometime grant holders. It can thus be said that the SSHRC (and the Canada Council) has had some impact on a very substantial proportion of the total clientele. This is even more evident when programs other than research grants are considered. For example, 23 per cent of respondents reported having received doctoral fellowships, 26 per cent leave fellowships, and 18 per cent grants for international travel.

Scholarly Productivity

The report by Adair and Davidson, referred to earlier, presented a quite positive picture of the productivity of scholars in the social sciences, and especially of those supported by SSHRC grants. On average, scholars reported having completed about 12 manuscripts of all kinds (published and unpublished) during the past three years, with about half of these being of the published variety. The SSHRC-funded scholars were found to be substantially more productive than others, especially in the refereed journal category, where the SSHRC funded group had published twice as many articles as their colleagues.

Our survey pursued the question of productivity only for those who had received SSHRC grants, and only for publications identified by respondents as resulting directly from these grants. In terms of total publications, the numbers would therefore be expected to be smaller than reported by Adair and Davidson. Some nine per cent of those receiving grants reported no publications, 25 per cent one or two publications, 32 per cent three to five publications, while an additional 32 per cent reported more than six publications. In terms of conference presentations and the like, about 24 per cent of grant holders reported none, a further 22 per cent one or two, 26 per cent three to five, and 30 per cent more than six publications.

This survey is limited in that no relationship can be developed between productivity and actual dollars awarded. There is also reason to question reliability of self-report data on such a matter. Furthermore, the data fail to take into account differences in the nature of the publication enterprise across disciplines. For example, a discipline in which the primary publication form is the book cannot be compared to one in which the journal article is the most common form. At best the figures are rough guides to productivity. Much more detailed studies are required to obtain a reasonable assessment of the impact of the Research Grants program. This point is addressed later in the report, as it has substantial significance for the kind of follow-up of grant holders needed by Council and for the allocation of resources to the follow-up task.

Principles and Priorities

Both individuals and organizations were asked a number of questions about the SSHRC's general approach to funding, including the emphasis on projects, the principle of "essential funding," scope of the program, research time stipends and the like. In addition, individuals were asked about the relative priorities of research grants and other programs.

The principle of essential funding was strongly reinforced by respondents. Organizations generally rejected alternatives such as success rates predetermined on historical or similar grounds (with appropriate budget adjustments), or partial support in order to allow some funding of all worthy projects. Individual respondents were somewhat more favourably disposed toward the latter alternative, but this remained distinctly the second ranked alternative after essential funding.

Individuals were asked to give their preferences for allocation of budgetary envelopes among disciplines. Here the highest ranked alternative was clearly allocation by discipline, with a reserve pool of funds to allow flexible success rates across disciplines. The current practice of allocation by discipline with no reserve was second ranked, while the alternative of a single pool of funds for which applicants in all disciplines would compete received substantially lower rankings.

On the question of priorities among programs, there was a slight tendency to favour larger allocations to research grants. As might be guessed, the favourite target for reduction in order to accomplish this was strategic grants, with doctoral fellowships second. It must be noted, however, that since only those favouring an increase in the allocation to research grants responded to the question about reductions in other programs, the total number expressing a desire for such reductions was relatively small.

Both individuals and organizations favoured retention of the current emphasis on the project rather than on the scholarly record of the applicant. The pattern of response for individuals was somewhat different from that for organizations because individuals were asked to choose between alternatives which included balanced emphasis on the two criteria as well as a choice between the two. However, even in the presence of this alternative, a substantially higher proportion (46 versus 28 per cent) ranked the current system highest. Consistent with this response was the strong tendency of respondents to favour support of a broad group of scholars rather than a more elite group of most productive scholars. This response is not entirely congruent with the rejection of the idea of partial support in order to spread funds among more scholars, since the broader the group to be funded, the smaller the amount available for each project.

In view of current tendencies toward more programmatic research, and Council's desire to encourage more long-term research, it is interesting that individual respondents tended to favour strongly (72 versus 23 per cent) the support of short-term work. This is consistent with an emphasis on projects rather than persons, of course, and seems to reflect a "think small" approach among most respondents. It is important to note, however, that this item explicitly stated that emphasis on long-term research would have to be at the expense of supporting fewer new projects. Had this trade-off been less obvious, the response pattern might have been different.

On the question of restoring research time stipends, respondents representing organizations were about evenly divided, while a slight majority of individual respondents favoured their reinstatement. Those individuals who did believe stipends should be reinstated favoured such a move only if new funds could be found. Similarly, respondents chose the alternative of funding the cost of teaching replacement much more frequently than other alternatives. The

previous system of salary replacement was, in fact, chosen by only sixteen per cent of respondents.

Information and Procedures

Nearly three-fourths of the individual respondents indicated that their principal source of information about the Research Grants program was their own university, with only eleven per cent indicating that direct communication with the SSHRC was their major source. Some 70 per cent rated the quality of the information available as either excellent or good. Of those rating the information fair or poor, however, most identified the SSHRC rather than themselves or their universities, as the source of inadequacy.

Just over half the respondents reported having seen a copy of the Guide for Applicants. Again, most of these rated the Guide as either excellent or good. Similar proportions rated the application forms and related documents as excellent or good. On the question of application procedures, respondents who were aware of the procedures were about evenly divided on whether they are too complex. A similar response was obtained from organizations. While this does not indicate overwhelming concern with the complexity of the procedures, the negative response is certainly sufficient to account for a high frequency of complaints, since dissatisfied users are more likely to be heard from on such a matter.

Assessment and Adjudication

This is obviously the most contentious issue before the committee. It is clear that no major gains in administrative efficiency can be achieved without altering the current method of assessment and adjudication. At the same time, the impression has existed that the community would be unalterably opposed to any such change. Unfortunately, surveys are not capable of answering the fundamental question of whether changes in the procedures would have any effect on the ultimate quality of decisions. Instead, we are confined to reporting the views of the community on the current system and reactions to certain specific propositions for change.

As expected, the dominant position of our respondents was that the current system of adjudication should be retained. Nevertheless, many individual respondents appeared willing to accept certain alternatives posed to them. Similarly, organizations made a number of specific suggestions for change. Among individuals, the second ranked alternative (after maintaining the status quo) was the elimination of external assessors for small grant applications. Respondents overwhelmingly felt that procedures should be less rigorous for small grants. However, the cutoff point for a small grant was seen by nearly half the respondents as under \$10,000 and by nearly three-fourths as under \$15,000. These figures are substantially smaller than those proposed in the various staff papers and internal debates on the issue. In fact, applications for less than these amounts represent a fairly small proportion of the total file load of the Division.

On the question of selection of external assessors, respondents tended to favour a fairly narrow pool of assessors, with about 30 per cent believing that assessors should be drawn only from scholars within the area of specialization of the applicant. About half felt, however, that scholars within the discipline would be acceptable. With respect to methods of selection of

assessors, most respondents favoured a combination of methods, including nominations from the applicant, officer selection, and the use of data banks and directories. No single method received any outstanding degree of support. All were ranked reasonably close to each other. The proposition that assessors be chosen by adjudication committees was top ranked by only five per cent of respondents, but received second and third rankings by substantially greater numbers.

Respondents were asked about the nature of the feedback desired from the adjudication process and about opportunities to respond to assessors' comments. Some 60 per cent wished to continue the current practice of forwarding verbatim comments of assessors. None of the other alternatives, including various summaries of assessor and committee comments, received nearly as much support. As for opportunity to respond to assessors, the highest ranked alternative was to allow staff to seek responses from applicants judged by assessors to be marginal. In this case, however, the rankings were much closer, with various other alternatives, such as re-submission in the next competition, lengthening the turnaround time to allow response to assessors, and holding special meetings of adjudication committees to deal with difficult cases, all being highly ranked by significant numbers of respondents.

Respondents from the various organizations were not presented with alternative propositions, but were asked to suggest their own. Again, it is clear that preserving the current system is strongly favoured. A variety of other suggestions was received, although no specific alternative was suggested by more than a small number of respondents. This is to be expected, of course, in response to an open-ended question. Some of the suggestions were, in fact, quite interesting. Those that appear especially useful are summarized briefly later in the chapter.

Individual respondents were presented with a number of alternative possible functions of adjudication committees. The highest ranked function was that of making final decisions on awards. Beyond this, the relative rankings of various alternatives were similar. It is significant to note that a fairly highly ranked function was that of initial screening of applications, a function which is not now performed. Such a function would be consistent with any move toward committee choice of assessors. The latter alternative, however, was not particularly well received.

Monitoring

Only one item on the survey instrument dealt with the topic of monitoring of funded projects. Opinion was divided on this point. Some 40 per cent of respondents felt that periodic interim reports of a project should be required, as a condition of payment of further installments of a grant. Beyond this, some 20 per cent each favoured requiring a final report suitable for monograph publication, requiring copies of all publications emanating from a funded project as a condition of further funding, and examining the overall publication record of an applicant but not keeping a file of publications from grants. Overall, therefore, there seems to be substantial support for more intense monitoring than is now performed, although the specific form such monitoring might take yielded no consensus.

Appeal

Sixty per cent of individual respondents agreed that there should be some provision for appeal of adjudication committee decisions. It is surprising that this proportion was not higher, since it is difficult to understand why anyone would object to the concept of appeal in itself. Perhaps this does reflect the general high level of confidence in the current system, and especially in the adjudication committees. Alternatively, it may indicate some difficulty with possible means of implementing an appeal procedure. In fact, respondents were rather divided on this issue, with fairly equal proportions selecting the alternatives of an interdisciplinary appeal committee, direct appeal to adjudication committees, complete reassessments, and the use of the Advisory Academic Panel as an appeal body.

Views of Research Grants Officers

Since the focus of the interviews with officers in the Division was somewhat different from that of the consultation with scholars and organizations, the views of officers deserve separate comment. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the officer interviews tended strongly to reinforce the position that current procedures are preferable to any major changes, especially in assessment and adjudication procedures. As might be expected, officers did have some views and suggestions about improving efficiency. These tended to centre around specific operational procedures, especially automation, rather than being associated with fundamental change.

Officers were first asked about the purposes of the program and the nature of the clientele served. In general, there was consensus that the program should attempt to serve a broad rather than a more elite clientele. However, there was a divergence of views on whether the SSHRC should take an activist stance in encouraging greater participation. There was some tendency to associate greater activism with the growth of targeted research, although the two are not inherently linked. Some officers felt that the program now funds most of the good research being proposed and that competition is not now particularly intense. Others felt, however, that there is much latent demand in the system which could be encouraged by a more activist stance. There was a fairly widespread feeling that Council should more clearly articulate the objectives of the program.

Officers drew attention to a number of operational problems in the system. Although there was no widespread feeling that the workload is unmanageable, some did express concern about imbalances both among officers and at different times of year. Most felt that they could handle a modest increase in workload. All felt, however, that workload is directly related to number of files and that few economies of scale are possible under the current system. A number of individuals spoke of inefficiencies in the system, but the focus of concern was quite different for different persons. Some associated inefficiency with delay in implementing computerized procedures, while others were less optimistic that automation would solve many problems. Some saw the problem as largely associated with overlapping programs. It was argued, for example, that leave fellowships should be treated as research grants, and that applications for strategic grants could be handled through the regular research grants competition. In general, officers felt that the current situation is not as bad as that of a few years ago, and that some progress is being made in improving efficiency.

As already indicated, officers strongly supported the current system of assessment and adjudication. Their views on committee functioning are especially notable since officers have much more intimate contact with committees than do scholars at large. There was a general consensus that committees are necessary to make the ranking decisions required in a competition. It was felt that the committees provide academic legitimacy for the stringent decisions necessary, and that they thus act as protection for staff and Council. The fact that committees serve to involve members of the academic community in the work of the Council was also pointed out. This was seen as having advantages in engendering support for the organization.

The few problems seen with the committee system tended to centre around unevenness in decision standards, the need to enlarge certain committees, and the means of allocating committee envelopes, which is seen as encouraging uneven quality in projects funded at the lower margin. Interestingly, in view of the arguments in the Caskie report, there was no consensus on whether the existence of committees has relieved workload pressures on officers. It is clear that officers now spend a good deal of time in preparation and follow-up of committee meetings and on the maintenance of the committees themselves. This work has replaced the former job of preparing reports and recommendations for the Advisory Academic Panel and Council, but it is not clear whether this is an even trade. Certainly the economies envisaged in the Caskie Report have not been realized.

Aside from general support of the use of assessors and the current selection process, officers had surprisingly few comments on assessment. Again, many felt that the credibility of the program is tied to the use of assessors. Most felt that they were conveying the views of the committees in expressing a need to continue with the use of assessors. Relatively few expressed concern about difficulty in finding assessors, although a number spoke of the need to over-select in order to ensure an adequate number of assessments for each file.

The final major topic discussed with officers was that of follow-up and monitoring. Here an interesting divergence of views appeared between the follow-up officer and some of her colleagues. In the view of the follow-up officer, this function is essentially one of ensuring that funds have been properly expended, in accordance with Council regulations. Some other officers, on the other hand, viewed follow-up in more academic terms, as a means of becoming familiar with the work of grant holders, as a source of information for assessment of subsequent applications, and the like. Many officers expressed a desire for more opportunity to interact with grant holders, and for developing the ability to report on the results of research within their portfolios. Others see follow-up as one of the major sources of inefficiency in the system especially as a source of complaints from the clientele about delays in response to routine questions.

On the latter point, the follow-up officer did indicate that a turnaround time of two to three months is now typical, although it is hoped that this can soon be reduced substantially. The follow-up load is seen as quite heavy (of the order of 200-250 letters per month and 6-7 telephone calls per day). A special source of difficulty is that grant holders continue to request permission for routine budget transfers which are no longer necessary under the new regulations. Many enquiries also have to be routed to the grants officers because they refer to changes in project plans. Nevertheless, the follow-up officer is not favourably disposed toward transfer of the entire task to other

officers, because, it is argued, a systematic procedure is required for monitoring of financial statements, ensuring that progress reports are submitted, monitoring personnel reports and the like.

Views of Management

The views of the Council's senior management and program directors were developed in a series of meetings and were conveyed to the committee in the form of a report of these meetings. In addition, the Director General, Program Branch and the Director of the Research Grants Division attended meetings of the committee (the latter acting as secretary) and were able to address the issues under deliberation throughout the process. Finally, the committee was aided by a paper prepared by the Director outlining options available and summarizing the positions taken in previous analyses of the program.

Members of the senior management team took the position that the program is in need of change because it has not fully met its objectives and because a more economical form of administration is required to allow resources to be allocated to other activities of Council. The broader management group suggested some revision in objectives, emphasizing encouraging research capacity, encouraging research which otherwise would not take place, enhancing the quality of research, and providing research experience for graduate students and junior scholars. Operationally, it was suggested that the program support as many researchers as possible on the basis of track record, potential, and proposed activities. In addition, it was suggested that the program provide as much funding as possible to successful applicants, having regard to the overall program budget, the pool of qualified applicants, demonstrated need for funds, and potential for the advancement of knowledge. Finally, the management group emphasized the importance of providing continuity through multi-year funding.

In the view of management, the goal of change would be to provide a system of program administration which is fair and flexible, and which leads to an increase in the amount of research being conducted. The specific proposal for adjudication was a variation on the theme of person-based adjudication for smaller grants, with committee selection of assessors as necessary, and with partial funding, high success rates, and a minimum of budget restrictions on successful applicants. For larger grants, a system similar to that currently in place would be retained.

It should be noted that the position taken by management was formulated before the recent Treasury Board directive on staff reductions. Subsequent discussion has made it clear that the prospective loss of ten staff positions over the next several years will have a major impact on program delivery unless means can be found to streamline administrative processes. In the view of management, it is difficult to see how the Research Grants program can continue with its current staff allocations in the face of overall staff losses. A reduction of several person-years will be required to give flexibility in staff redeployment, to allow other important but neglected tasks to be undertaken, and to prepare for possible new programs as envisioned in the Five-Year Plan.

Additional Suggestions for Change

As indicated earlier, the thrust of opinion in the academic community is in the direction of retaining the existing system of administration. Nevertheless, a number of respondents did make specific suggestions for changes

which they believed would either simplify administration or make the program more responsive to the needs of the community. Most of these suggestions appeared in submissions from scholarly associations and other organizations, as these were encouraged to respond in an open-ended manner to the committee's questions. However, a number of individuals also made such suggestions, either as an adjunct to their questionnaire responses or independently through letters to the committee. These responses represent no consensus -- indeed most would have come from only one or two respondents. Although most such suggestions were ultimately not adopted, for various reasons, some of the more interesting ones are worth listing here as they did assist the committee in its deliberations. These also serve as a measure of the range of opinion which does exist in the community.

1. Introduce a separate person-based program parallel to the existing one.
2. Reduce the number of competitions, the number of assessors per file, and/or the number of adjudication committees.
3. Increase the limit on awards made under the General Research Grants program in order to remove applications for small amounts from the regular competition. Alternatively, there have been suggestions that this amount should not be changed because it is important that scholars be able to compete in a national program, even if their requests are small.
4. Use a panel of assessors within each discipline to the task of searching for assessors, to allow standardization of the assessment process, and to allow assessors access to several files for comparative purposes.
5. Introduce a more precise rating scale and use a point system for ultimate ranking of applications.
6. Reduce the number of assessors or resort to assessments by adjudication committee members for small grant applications.
7. Adopt the NSERC system of committee adjudication, supplemented by external assessors as necessary. Others specifically stated, however, that this system is totally inappropriate for the social sciences and humanities.
8. Make committees responsible for initial screening of applications and selection of assessors.
9. Distinguish between established and beginning scholars to ensure that beginning scholars are not in direct competition with those having established research records. Alternatively, some have argued that the system should be biased in favour of newer scholars, while others have taken the opposite position.

10. Make proper allowances for interdisciplinary research, emerging disciplines, and areas which do not fall neatly within established disciplinary boundaries.
11. Simplify application procedures and reduce the amount of detailed documentation required. Some have suggested that current procedures require the project to be completed before an application can be submitted. Others have argued that the system is biased toward disciplines where research plans can be reduced to routines.
12. Make provision for greater support of the "scholar" rather than research assistants or other staff. In particular, some form of support for the time of the scholar is needed (but not research time stipends in their earlier form).
13. Allow greater flexibility in budger transfers once a grant is awarded.
14. Introduce three grant categories (small, medium, large), with varying intensity of assessment and adjudication.
15. Reduce the emphasis on large-scale projects to yield more resources for smaller scale research.

As these suggestions indicate, many individual scholars and scholarly organizations are willing to contemplate change, or at least accept that some change is inevitable. However, views on change are quite diverse, and it is difficult to obtain any sense of direction in the suggestions. For each suggestion, there seems to be a contradictory one equally strongly held. In the face of such contradictions, along with the strong body of opinion favouring little or no change, the committee has had to recognize that almost any proposal for change will meet some opposition. While the nature and strength of such opposition needs to be assessed, and the rationale for various positions taken in the community understood, in the final analysis, an approach must be taken that is coherent and which can be defended, if not universally accepted at the outset.

III DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

This chapter attempts to present the various positions which might be taken on the issues before the committee, to suggest possible courses of action, in light of the countervailing arguments, and to develop the committee's own views and the rationale for these views. The task is obviously to arrive at a position which addresses some of the concerns with administrative efficiency, while doing as little violence as possible to the credibility of the program in the eyes of the scholarly community. While it is debatable whether it is possible to accomplish such a balance, the attempt must be made.

Part of the task is, of course, to develop arguments which will convince the community that administrative problems are real and must be addressed. The problem may be as much one of perception as reality. For example, there is simply no answer to the question whether the decisions made under the current system are very different, much less "better," than under any other system. What is clear is that decisions are now quite defensible, in academic terms. Whether this would remain true under a radically different system remains to be tested.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the only purpose of the exercise was to develop a rationale for a preconceived agenda for change. The committee has approached the issues open-mindedly, with regard for the various points of view expressed. To the extent possible, the committee's final position is the result of an effort to find common ground among seemingly contradictory arguments or to strike some balance between such arguments. In other cases, the committee has taken positions which are not representative of those of any particular group, but which seem appropriate to the problem at hand. Finally, certain recommendations are likely to reinforce the positions taken by one or other group as these are judged appropriate.

Objectives of the Program

That research activity in the social sciences and humanities warrants support from public funds is perhaps self-evident only to the academic community itself. (We hasten to add that we consider ourselves part of this community.) The objectives of a Research Grants program, or indeed of any similar program, should therefore follow from a clearly articulated statement of why public funds should be spent on such activities. Unfortunately, no such clear statement exists. The Act of Parliament under which the Council functions is, of course, a de facto statement to this effect. This Council presumably exists because Parliament has judged it valuable to direct resources toward research. It is left to Council itself, however, to define the specific programs under which it will attempt to fulfill its mandate. Since many of the programs of this Council were inherited from its predecessor, the Canada Council, it is not surprising that the origins of the program, and its original rationale, are somewhat obscure.

Some would argue, of course, that no specific statement of objectives is required, and that the idea of "supporting excellence in research" or a similar general statement will suffice. The problem is that such a statement can translate itself into many possible programs that may not look at all like the one which now exists. For example, support of excellence can just as easily

be interpreted to mean support of an elite corps of scholars as support of the broader group so obviously preferred by most members of the community. A more specific statement is thus required to give focus to the existing program.

The closest we have been able to come to such a statement is in the four point list of objectives formulated by the Advisory Academic Panel and endorsed by Council in March, 1982. These objectives are as follows:

1. TO STIMULATE THE UNDERTAKING OF RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
2. TO ADVANCE THE STATE OF AVAILABLE KNOWLEDGE
3. TO ENCOURAGE THE DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH
4. TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH SKILLS

It is almost as difficult to derive the specific form of the present program from these objectives as from more general statements such as promotion of excellence. For example, the objective of encouraging dissemination is obviously not well met when program regulations impose severe restrictions on the use of funds for the preparation of reports or travel to conferences. Similarly, there is no regulation in the program which specifically encourages the employment of graduate students or junior researchers in order to stimulate the development of research skills.

It is possible, of course, to work backwards, and attempt to derive program objectives from the regulations which exist to guide applicants and from the practices used in adjudicating applications. The Guide for Applicants makes a number of statements which may be interpreted as objectives. Among these one finds reference to independent research, coherent projects with well defined research plans, support of career scholars in universities along with private scholars, and the use of funds to defray the direct costs of a project and not overhead costs.

One would expect that these objectives would then be carried over into the criteria used in assessment of applications. Unfortunately, these criteria are only partially consistent with the objectives as they appear in the Guide. For example, assessors are asked to address the scholarly significance of the project and the soundness of the research plans, both of which are referred to in the Guide. On the other hand, the assessment criteria include the theoretical significance and practical importance of the project and the competence of the applicant. While none of these contradict stated objectives, they are also not an explicit part of these objectives.

Taking the Guide for Applicants and the assessment criteria together as a summary of the "objectives in practice" of the program, it can be said that these include support of independent research, of both theoretical and practical importance, conducted by competent scholars, as judged by their peers. The objectives also refer to support of specific projects rather than overall research programs and to payment of only direct costs. Given current application histories and success rates, the objectives should also state that only a relatively select group can be expected to receive support. There would be no reference to dissemination or to research training as now appears in the general objectives approved by Council.

Although reiterating the objectives in practice enlightens us about the existing situation, logically one ought to proceed in the opposite direction, and put into practice a program which meets a set of prior goals. This finally brings us to the question of what these goals ought to be or, more specifically, whether the current goals, as given by Council in 1982, remain appropriate.

Two possible arguments may be advanced for the use of public funds for research in the social sciences and humanities. The first is the view that the advancement of knowledge is inherently meritorious, and that its support is one of the marks of an enlightened society. This is perhaps self-evident to many scholars. However, it would not be surprising to find the public somewhat skeptical on this point, especially in a time of economic restraint. While the advancement of knowledge may, indeed, be meritorious, its care for public support does not follow directly from its merit.

The second argument is that research contributes in some way to the national interest. This interest may be cultural -- such as the creation of a national identity or a national presence in the international world of scholarship. It may also be social -- as in the advancement of knowledge which will contribute to the development of public policy. This last point is, of course, the one which leads to support of research targeted to specific themes of national concern -- strategic grants, in our parlance. However, in an argument analogous to that for stimulating free enterprise to achieve economic growth, one might equally well hold that stimulating independent research may be the best way to generate knowledge which will ultimately contribute most to public policy.

The Council has recently reiterated its commitment to independent research as the core of its operation. This makes the task of the committee easier, since it may be assumed that Council would not entertain an argument to abandon or scale down its major program of support for independent research. We accept that both the cultural and social arguments are valid, that support of independent research is a priority item among Council programs, and that we would wish to retain the idea of project support and the principle of peer assessment as the basis for awarding grants (the latter two points are discussed in subsequent sections). The Research Grants program may thus be seen as having the single general objective of offering incentives for the conduct of independent research, through support of specific projects of high quality, as proposed by scholars and judged by their peers.

It is important to note precisely what is emphasized and de-emphasized in this objective, as this will have substantial impact on the subsequent discussion. The principle of peer judgment is made part of the objective to ensure that there is no mistaking Council's commitment to the process. Nothing the committee has heard or discussed gives any reason to believe that peer judgment should be abandoned. Precisely what form this process should take is the topic discussed in the next section.

The objective also reinforces the support of projects. This is intended to indicate that the program does not defray normal institutional costs in conducting research. The assumption here is that the universities do have a research function, and that the normal allocation of resources to universities is intended to cover overhead costs. The idea of support of projects does not,

however, preclude taking into account the competence of the applicant in awarding grants. The degree to which this should be a consideration is also a matter to be discussed later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that emphasis on projects implies that the program should be open to any scholar or group who can present a proposal for a high-quality project. Support should therefore not be confined to a narrowly based corps of established scholars. This has implications for participation rates and for whether Council should actively encourage participation by a larger group of scholars. Again, this point will be addressed subsequently.

Finally, it is noted that the general objective makes no reference to the development of knowledge for social or cultural policy purposes, the development of research capacity, the support of career scholars, or the dissemination of research. The first omission ensures that the program is not seen as one of targeted research. This is dealt with by another of the Council's programs (Strategic Grants). The same is true for the development of research capacity (Fellowships) and the dissemination of research (Research Communications). While it is recognized that a single program can have multiple functions, it is important to single out its primary function to ensure that this is properly understood. As for the support of career scholars, while it is expected that most applicants would fall into this category, the program is not intended explicitly to fund research careers. In this sense, the first-time applicant, or the individual with a short-term but important research topic, is placed on the same footing as the scholar with an ongoing program of research.

Assessment and Adjudication

As already indicated, this matter is obviously at the heart of the committee's mandate. The issue of how best to judge applications, keeping in mind both academic credibility and administrative efficiency, has exercised Council, staff, Advisory Academic Panel, and various committees for several years. During that period the program has undergone a number of changes which have only served to make the problem more complex. The establishment of a committee system, the introduction of a competition, creation of a major grants category, generally greater pressure on available funds, and the need to find staff to sustain other Council programs have all contributed to increased pressure on the system. More recently, and much more seriously, the organization has been faced with the prospect of a substantial staff reduction, as part of the federal government's program to reduce expenditures.

It is tempting to attribute the controversy which surrounds the issue of assessment to a characteristic conflict between academics and bureaucrats or, less personally, between academic integrity and administrative efficiency. However, the issue goes well beyond this, as it relates to the nature and quality of the funding decisions made. It is thus worth examining briefly the nature of decision-making in the current situation, and the types of decision errors which may be made.

It is typical to analyze decisions in terms of the sort of fourfold table which appears in Figure 1. In our case, the final outcome of the adjudication process is a decision to fund or not to fund (leaving aside nuances such as conditional funding or funding with reduced budget). A funded project may be successful or unsuccessful, by some measure of success. A non-funded

project can potentially be successful or unsuccessful. (Alternatively, such a project may proceed without funding or receive funding from other sources. We need not consider these possibilities here). A correct decision occurs when a funded project is successful or when a potentially unsuccessful project is rejected. Errors occur when a funded project is unsuccessful or when a potentially successful project is not funded. These may be referred to as false positives and false negatives respectively.

Figure 1
Types of Decisions and Outcomes

Decision	Outcome	
	Success	Failure
Award Grant	Correct Decision	Error False Positive
Reject	Error False Negative	Correct Decision

Obviously, the ideal adjudication system would be one which maximizes correct decisions and minimizes both types of errors. This is straightforward in principle, but extremely difficult to bring about in practice. A number of important questions arise in the case of awarding research grants. By what measure do we determine success? How do we obtain the necessary data for such a determination, in a system which is geared to judgment at the proposal stage but not at the outcome stage? What are the relative consequences of the two types of error? What are the effects of various adjudication procedures on the quality of decisions and on the relative size of the two types of error?

First, it should be recognized that the two types of error are not necessarily symmetrical. An adjudication system designed to minimize one type of error is likely to increase the probability of the other. The best example of this is the difference between a competition and a non-competitive awards system. The effect of a competition is to reduce false positives, while increasing false negatives, since it is understood that some potentially successful projects will be rejected. In a tight budgetary situation, the only alternative to a competition is some form of partial funding. It might be argued that the consequence of partial funding would be many more false positives, for two reasons. First, there would likely be a tendency on the part of adjudicators to award grants to more marginal applicants. Second, researchers might find themselves unable to meet their project objectives in the face of inadequate budgets. A major consideration therefore is which type of error is considered most tolerable (or least intolerable).

In the extreme, the consequence of a false positive is wasted public funds. The consequence of a false negative, again in the extreme, is lost knowledge. It is recognized that, by its nature, research is a fairly risky enterprise, and success cannot be assured. Nevertheless, in circumstances of

financial restraint, it is to be expected that an attempt will be made to minimize the risk of wasted public funds. Under these conditions, competitive adjudication is to be preferred to partial funding, as it leads to fewer false positives. Also, to avoid supporting projects which fail for lack of adequate funds, budgets for funded projects should remain sufficient to maximize the probability of successful completion of the project. We are thus led to the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT THE EXISTING PRINCIPLE OF "ESSENTIAL FUNDING UNDER COMPETITIVE ADJUDICATION" BE MAINTAINED IN PREFERENCE TO A SYSTEM OF PARTIAL FUNDING.

The second consideration, that of measuring success, presents even more vexing problems, as the recent report on evaluation of a research grants program (the Paquet-Taylor Report) attests. To begin with, the current adjudication system is "front loaded" in that only potential success is being judged. It is usually some years later (in some disciplines many years later) that the outcomes of a project are apparent. Even then, however, there is no objective or universal measure of success. Publication counts, citations, awards, peer approval and the like all have their flaws as measures of success. The question is whether the system should be redesigned to be more "rear loaded" with increased emphasis on research productivity.

Despite the difficulties, there are good arguments that increased emphasis on productivity is both possible and feasible. These arguments are developed at some length in the Paquet-Taylor Report. What is required is a follow-up system which will ensure that more systematic data are gathered on the products of the program. Again, more will be said on this point later. Before returning to the immediate question, we note only that an important distinction must be made between evaluation of the program as a whole, in terms of products, and assessment of an individual application. The Paquet-Taylor project was designed to address the first point. Our major task is to address the second, although certain recommendations are eventually made on program evaluation.

Under current budgetary conditions, and those likely to obtain on the near future, this Council can obviously not afford to award funds to all or most applicants, wait a few years to assess productivity, and then stop or reduce funding for those who are less productive (a variation of this process is, however, in place at NSERC, with its much larger budget). Some form of "up front" adjudication system is thus required. A number of alternative systems may be devised, varying substantially in complexity and cost of administration, and in their credibility in the eyes of the academic community. The latter point takes on greater significance as the competition for funds increases and as it becomes necessary to defend negative decisions to ever larger numbers of applicants. Ironically, the problem of administrative costs also looms larger in the same circumstances, as financial restraints are even more likely to apply to such costs than to the grants budget itself, a point which has struck this Council very forcefully in recent weeks.

In terms of quality of decisions, unfortunately, there is little evidence on effects of alternative adjudication systems. A recent analysis of National Science Foundation grants (Cole and Cole, 1978) suggested that there is a random factor of some 20 per cent in an adjudication system based on external

assessments followed by staff review and decision (random errors can be of either type). In this case, the staff decision-makers were scholars in the relevant disciplines seconded to NSF for a period of time. This review also showed that the NSF system was relatively free of political and regional biases and the influence of an "old boys" network of established scholars, but that highly productive scholars (in terms of publications and citations) were the most likely to receive support.

The Cole and Cole study does reinforce the idea that a peer review system is relatively unbiased, albeit not perfect in terms of random decision errors. However, it did not address the kind of two-stage system currently used in our program. A preliminary analysis by this committee of one aspect of this system indicated that the correlation between assessors' ratings and ultimate decisions of adjudication committees is quite small (point biserial correlation of .28). At the upper end of the rating scale, most projects were funded. In the lower ranges, however, there was about an even split between funded and non-funded projects. This suggests that committees operate fairly independently of assessors at the lower margin. This analysis is limited, of course, in that it did not allow for the use made by committees of assessors' written comments. It is our impression that these are, in fact, more salient to committees than the rating scales themselves.

With the limited data available, a firm position cannot be taken on the relative effectiveness of alternative systems of adjudication. We are thus left with attempting to strike a judicious balance between the somewhat conflicting requirements of academic credibility and administrative efficiency. To facilitate the discussion, it is useful to delineate a range of possible alternative procedures under which decisions might be made.

1. One staff member (the President, perhaps?) might make all decisions.
2. Staff officers within each discipline could make decisions.
3. Staff officers could make decisions aided by peer assessments.
4. Council itself, or a standing committee (the Advisory Academic Panel, perhaps?) could make decisions on the basis of staff recommendations.
5. Discipline-based or interdisciplinary committees could make decisions without external assessments.
6. Committees could make decisions aided by external assessments (the current system).

Some would argue that an experienced proposal reviewer can easily tell the good from the bad and could make decisions that are just as error-free as the most elaborate system. In the absence of an empirical test, it is not known if this is true. However, there are good arguments for rejecting a purely staff-based system. These centre around the self-governing nature of scholarly activity, and the principle that the quality of academic work, like that of work in many professions, can only be judged by peers. While it may be possible to employ experts in the appropriate disciplines as staff in a granting agency,

their status as peers may be perceived as compromised by their employment. In the extreme, it may be argued that employees may be subject to political, management, and other pressures which would interfere with their professional judgment.

Of course, there is no guarantee that even the most elaborate peer review system would not also introduce biases. For example, the impetus for the Cole and Cole study of the NSF granting system was the perception of discrimination of various sorts in the award of grants. A peer review system may be seen as especially conducive to the establishment of an "old boys" network, favouring established scholars and those in the mainstream of a discipline. The Cole and Cole study was especially concerned with this. However, little evidence of discrimination was found in the NSF system. More generally, it may be argued that the danger of such a network is less than that of political or other interference in academic activity, and that a peer review system can be designed to safeguard against this. In any case, there is no assurance that resorting to purely staff decisions would improve efficiency drastically, because staff would then certainly have to do some of the work now done by academics at little or no cost.

The committee is also persuaded by the argument that a system which involves a fairly large number of scholars in its operation is desirable. Of course, in doing this, there is a risk of exposing the system to criticism from those familiar with it. There has certainly been some of this in the current system. However, it is felt that such criticism is easier to bear than accusations of secrecy which might emanate from a less open system.

Having accepted the validity of peer review, whether or not this results in improved decisions, we are left with the question of what form of peer review is most appropriate. Assessors, committee members, Advisory Academic Panel, and even Council itself may be considered "peers" by some definition of the term. As pointed out in the Stairs Report, however, Council members may be perceived as politically "tainted" in a manner which would raise serious credibility problems. There is thus reason to have a system in place which operates at arms' length from the Council. A case can be made that the Advisory Academic Panel is just such a body. However, it is difficult to imagine such a body being sufficiently representative to conduct adequate assessment. Furthermore, this would impose an intolerable workload on a small group of people.

Obviously members of the adjudication committees must be considered to be peers, by any definition. Why then do we need separate external assessors? The arguments are familiar. They are needed because committees cannot possibly be constituted to have the breadth of expertise needed to judge a given pool of applications. They are needed to relieve committee members of an intolerable workload. They are needed as a source of feedback to applicants. They are needed to help reduce committee bias against those not in the mainstream of a discipline or bias in favour of established scholars. They are needed as a further measure of credibility of the system. Finally, they are needed because some committee members have said they would refuse to serve unless assessments are provided.

The argument about committee expertise is difficult to sustain. It is difficult to believe that most work in the social sciences and humanities is so specialized as to be unintelligible to a researcher's colleagues within the

discipline. In any case, committees may be enlarged if necessary and balanced across areas of specialization or schools of thought. This task should be no more difficult than the matching of assessors to individual applications. Means could be found to deal with particularly difficult cases, especially those not within the mainstream of a discipline or those employing highly specialized methods or data sources. In particular, external assessors might be used only for such cases.

The question of committee workload is more difficult. A rough estimate made by this committee suggests that having adjudication committee members prepare three written assessments for each file would require up to three weeks per year for each committee member (depending on how many committee members were required to assess each application). Even assuming that committee members would have to be paid for such work, however, it is estimated that there would be substantial savings resulting from the reduction of staff time in selecting assessors. There is also reason to argue that this would yield greater standardization and higher quality in assessments. Finally, there would be some savings in staff time required for duplicating documents (not to mention duplication costs themselves) in a committee-based assessment system.

On the question of the use of assessments as a source of feedback to applicants a number of points may be made. First, this should be seen as a service to applicants rather than something which aids in the decision. While such feedback may help defend a decision, it does not help in making the decision itself. Furthermore, since the decision is a normative one, applicants may be refused simply because they do not rank highly enough, not because their projects are without merit. Finally, while written critiques may assist the applicant in improving the research or in preparing a subsequent application, there is no reason to use the adjudication system for this purpose. Applicants are free to seek their own critiques from colleagues for this purpose, as part of normal academic exchange. Overall, therefore, there seems to be little reason to obtain written assessments, at substantial cost to Council, for the sake of feedback.

On balance, we are left with the view that there is little substantive reason to maintain external peer assessment in its existing form. The principle of peer review itself is not at stake since there are alternative ways to produce assessments in a form suitable to permit informed decisions. There remains, however, a problem of perceptions, credibility, and possible committee workload. Before turning to this, however, we should ask whether, if external assessments are used, committees themselves are required.

The main reason for establishing committees originally was not to improve the quality of decisions, but rather to relieve some of the staff workload. Since this has obviously not been accomplished to any great degree (maintaining the committees, in itself, adds to workload), an argument may be made that committees are superfluous. The introduction of a competition has, however, given the committees an important new function, that of ranking applications. In a competitive environment, staff would have difficulty defending real or perceived false negatives. It might also be argued that staff members are not qualified to make normative judgments. There also remains the more fundamental argument of the locus of decisions. Obviously, in a competition, assessors cannot make decisions, since they do not have access to all files. Unless decisions could be reduced to a routine matter of compiling

scales based on assessor ratings, and imposing a cutoff point based on the available budget, it is difficult to envisage the system operating without committees. This is especially true when decisions also involve such matters as balancing small and large projects, determining the level of funding deemed "essential" and allowing for the characteristics of a particular discipline.

In short, we are led to conclude that the existence of committees can be justified on decision-making grounds. While it is felt that committee members could do an adequate job of assessment for most applications, there remain questions of credibility and committee workload. Our question therefore is whether future administrative constraints will permit the retention of at least a minimal form of external assessment.

In considering this point, the committee has accepted that some staff reductions in the Research Grants Division will be required, both to allow redeployment to other tasks and to comply with the Treasury Board directive. Before that directive, it was estimated that a redeployment of some staff from file processing to other tasks would be required. Unless the Research Grants Division is to be completely protected from staff reductions under the Treasury Board directive (and we do not see how this can be justified), it is now estimated that certain other positions will have to disappear entirely.

We note that determining the precise means by which staff reductions will take place is not considered part of this committee's mandate. We can only express the hope that this can be done equitably and with minimal effects on individual staff members. We do, however, have certain views on redeployment of staff. These will be developed in the course of the discussion.

The question now to be asked is what kind of assessment system can be maintained under the requirement that staff allocations to the task of file processing will have to be reduced. Assuming that staff reductions and reassignments are spread among both officers and support staff, both the routine of file processing (duplicating, mailing, preparation of packages for assessors and committees and the like) and the professional tasks of assessor selection and committee support will have to be streamlined.

Reduction in clerical and secretarial support will immediately require that the number of packages of material for each file be reduced. Unfortunately, the common argument that most clerical functions can be made more efficient by automation offers only minor prospects for improvement here. Aside from ensuring that the most efficient duplicating equipment is available to staff, the sort of clerical work involved in preparing packages for assessors and committee members does not lend itself to greatly increased efficiency through new technologies. There thus seems to be no way of bringing about such a change short of a substantial revision of assessment and adjudication procedures.

A similar conclusion applies to the reduction of officer workload. It is estimated that about two months of the time of each officer is occupied with locating assessors and follow-up work to ensure that the requisite number of assessments is in place for each file. A number of officers have indicated that workload is not balanced over the year, largely because of this task. It is clear that we shall no longer be able to afford such imbalances. A large part of the remainder of officers' time is occupied with support to committees

and reading files. There is some scope for improvement through simplifying the requirements for project descriptions and reducing the number of pages of description allowed. Nevertheless, assessment still seems to be the only area in which substantial economies can be achieved.

Assessment could be retained if academics themselves were to undertake some of the work now performed by officers. Under the circumstances, this is not an unreasonable expectation, since the community has obviously taken the position that external assessment is fundamental to the system. At the same time, one could not expect any scholar or group of scholars to spend the time now spent by officers on this task. In any case this would be counter-productive, both in terms of cost and credibility, as some scholars might have to become virtually full-time Council employees to carry out this work. Furthermore, we would not wish to lose the expertise in selecting assessors, and the assessor files so carefully maintained by the officers. We are thus left with an attempt at compromise, involving a combination of reduced numbers of assessments, the use of committee members as assessors, and collaboration of committee chairs and officers in selection of assessors. This compromise is embodied in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT TWO ASSESSMENTS NORMALLY BE OBTAINED FOR EACH FILE, WITH ONE ASSESSOR BEING A COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ONE BEING EXTERNAL. A LARGER NUMBER OF ASSESSMENTS WOULD BE SOUGHT FOR CASES JUDGED TO PRESENT EXCEPTIONAL DIFFICULTY AND FOR APPLICATIONS FOR MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS.

RECOMMENDATION 3

THAT BOTH THE COMMITTEE AND THE EXTERNAL ASSESSOR BE CHOSEN BY THE CHAIR OF THE APPROPRIATE ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE, IN CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL STAFF, AS APPROPRIATE.

RECOMMENDATION 4

THAT THE PRACTICE OF SENDING ASSESSORS' REPORTS TO APPLICANTS BE DISCONTINUED AND REPLACED (IN THE CASE OF REFUSALS, CONDITIONAL AWARDS, OR AWARDS WITH SUBSTANTIAL BUDGET REDUCTIONS) BY A COMMITTEE REPORT EXPLAINING THE DECISION.

RECOMMENDATION 5

THAT THE REQUIREMENT FOR SUBMISSION OF SIX COPIES OF THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND EIGHT COPIES OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS BE SUBJECT TO A STAFF REVIEW, WITH A VIEW TO REDUCING THIS REQUIREMENT.

One further relatively minor point is worth making here. It is clear from officers' descriptions that much of the difficulty with assessments is a consequence of sending files to assessors on speculation, with consequent delays in finding out whether an assessor will actually examine a particular file. This leads to the need to oversample assessors to allow for refusals and non-responses. We understand that substantial follow-up, usually by telephone, is required, to ensure an adequate set of assessments for many files. In the view of the committee, substantial gains in time can be effected by using the

telephone to obtain an assessors' assent before mailing the file. In our experience, one is much more likely to obtain a positive response from a telephone conversation than from a mailed package, and such a response is available immediately.

The Person-Project Distinction

This point is addressed briefly because it has always been closely linked to the issue of external assessors. It has been held, for example, that elimination of assessors somehow naturally leads to greater emphasis on the scholarly record of the person in adjudications. More important, it been argued that the current emphasis on projects has biased the system in favour of research which can be conducted using well-established methodology and, in particular, in favour of research in the social sciences rather than the humanities.

In the view of the committee, not only has the person-project distinction been somewhat overdrawn, it is a separate issue entirely from whether or not external assessment should be retained. About the only connection is that adjudication without assessors might be easier if emphasis were placed on track record. For example, less detail would be required in project descriptions and application procedures in general.

In the discussion of objectives, continuation of a project-based program was implied. Assessment of the person enters the picture mainly in judging an applicant's competence to conduct the proposed project. Contrary to what has often been held, there may be more reason for emphasizing the project in a system of reduced external assessment, in order to avoid reinforcing the network of established scholars. Although there has been some suggestion, from groups representing the humanities in particular, that increased person emphasis would be more appropriate for most small-scale research, this view is not widely supported by scholars. Furthermore, if the data on application patterns is any indication, there is already substantial implicit person emphasis in the system, through the self-selection process, whereby only successful applicants tend to reapply.

In practice, the current system is somewhat more balanced than is generally recognized. Whatever assessors may say about projects, committees faced with difficult choices are likely to favour scholars with a demonstrated record of performance. There is room in the system for committee discretion on such a matter, as determined by the requirements of a particular discipline. The committee therefore sees no reason to change the current emphasis. There is little gain in efficiency in doing so, and some loss is likely in terms of further narrowing the base of participants. At the same time, there is no reason why committees should not have some flexibility in deciding the balance of project-person emphasis appropriate for a particular discipline. This point will be addressed briefly in the next section. The question of special provision for beginning scholars or first-time applicants is also taken up in a later section. On the immediate issue, the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION 6

THAT APPLICATIONS BE JUDGED IN A BALANCED MANNER, WITH DUE REGARD NOT ONLY FOR THE QUALITY OF THE PROJECT BUT ALSO FOR THE RESEARCH RECORD OF THE APPLICANT.

Differences Between Disciplines

As already indicated, this issue requires brief discussion because some of the committee's correspondents have suggested that the characteristics of a particular discipline should be taken into account in various parts of the system. For example, it has been suggested that emphasis on the person is more appropriate in some disciplines than others, and that the current system is biased in favour of the social sciences because of the emphasis on supporting the costs of assistants and on presenting well-defined project proposals. Some have gone as far as to suggest different application and adjudication systems for different disciplines.

All of this, of course, tends to add complexity rather than contribute to streamlining the system. The committee is of the view that, whatever the validity of these arguments, changes should not be made which make the system more complicated than it now is. In any case, there is no reason why different committees should not vary in such things as award of short-term rather than long-term support, support of certain categories of expense rather than others whether to emphasize larger or smaller projects, or the relative weighting of person versus project. What one would want to avoid, however, is capriciousness in committee work, and differences from one competition to another which result from the characteristics of the committee and not the demands of the discipline. Similarly, it would be desirable to avoid differences between committees in their mode of operation which cannot be clearly justified on the basis of requirements of the discipline.

None of this requires change in the basic system, as long as committees can function fairly autonomously. However, it makes sense to have a mechanism in place to allow committees to compare procedures and to detect undue differences. There are also implications for the continued independence of committee budget envelopes, and perhaps some for the nature of instructions to applicants. These points will be taken up subsequently. Overall, however, there is little reason to change the formal features of the system to explicitly allow for differences between disciplines. We therefore recommend:

RECOMMENDATION 7

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRACTICES, METHODS, AND STANDARDS OF THEIR PARTICULAR DISCIPLINES IN SUCH MATTERS AS PERSON/PROJECT EMPHASIS, FUNDING OF SMALL- VERSUS LARGE-SCALE RESEARCH, PROVISIONS FOR BEGINNING SCHOLARS, AND, MOST IMPORTANT, THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION REQUIRED.

RECOMMENDATION 8

THAT THE GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS REFER TO THE PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED PRACTICES WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE OF THE APPLICANT AND TO THE RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES IN DETERMINING THE STANDARDS FOR PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS AND RELATED MATTERS.

RECOMMENDATION 9

THAT THE ADVISORY ACADEMIC PANEL BE REQUESTED TO EXAMINE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES WHICH ARISE FROM RESEARCH GRANT ADJUDICATIONS, AND ADVISE MANAGEMENT ACCORDINGLY.

Short- versus Long-Term Research

Although there seems to be no explicit policy on this issue, the general thrust of the Council has been in the direction of encouraging more long-term programmatic research. In light of this, it is interesting to find that most survey respondents favoured more support of short-term research, it having been pointed out in the survey item that emphasis on longer term work would lead to support of fewer new projects. Also, it is important to note that the trend in adjudication decisions has been away from making long-term awards, in order to avoid building up forward commitments. This has been done with staff encouragement, and is a consequence of the fear, quite justified a couple of years ago, that the entire budget for succeeding years would be committed to ongoing projects.

One of the consequences of short-term funding decisions for projects which, in reality, are long-term in nature, is the need for repeat applications for the same project. This is time-consuming for applicants and is self-defeating for staff and adjudication committees since repeat applications require the same assessment and adjudication procedures as new ones. If, for example, three annual applications are approved for a single three-year project, there is no real gain in budget commitments but a major increase in the adjudication burden. Although there are no firm figures on this, some of the gains in reducing forward commitments are likely illusory because of repeat applications.

In considering this problem, it is worth remembering the status of some of the projects funded under the former Negotiated Grants program. That program encouraged the initiation of a number of major projects, especially in the humanities, which have had much longer lives than anyone anticipated, and which continued to be funded long after the original program of support was discontinued. These are extreme examples of what is meant by long-term research, and are fairly easily distinguished from the sort of project mentioned above, which engenders annual repeat applications. If the current Major Research Grants category continues to draw applications of this sort, then we can expect to have the budget for this program largely committed on an ongoing basis. This may not be unreasonable, considering that there is probably a limited number of "life's work" projects likely to be initiated. The problem is that a further distinction needs to be made between relatively short-term but high-budget projects and the sort of project formerly funded under Negotiated Grants, especially the major editorial projects. The current Major Research Grants program is perhaps more suited to the former than to the latter (the Major Research Grants program is discussed in the next section). It is especially important that staff and adjudication committees identify proposals for major grants which are likely to demand funding well beyond the initial period, and that a policy for dealing with such proposals be formulated.

Beyond this, it appears that a workable policy would be for committees to devote a fixed proportion of their budgets to long-term research. Individual committees could make different decisions on this, depending on the requirements of the discipline. The purpose of fixing the proportion would be to avoid having an accumulation of decisions on individual cases determine both the policy and the amount of the forward commitments in the budget envelopes. It is especially important that applicants for long-term support clearly identify the possible future commitments needed, and that committees be aware of the implicit future commitments inherent in some projects.

Aside from the decided lack of enthusiasm in the community, recent Council debates over the residual projects from the Negotiated Grants program raise serious doubts about the encouragement of certain very long-term programs of research. The productivity of some of these programs is questionable and the timetables appear always to lag considerably. In a few cases the products have, indeed, been magnificent. In many more cases, however, Council seems to be in the position of having obligations to programs it would rather not have to continue funding. These projects continue to demand fairly large budget allocations which could otherwise be used to improve participation and success. It should be noted, however, that Council has recently moved to limit such obligations, so that an indefinite continuation of this situation is not expected.

These arguments may be summarized by saying that the degree of emphasis on long-term research should be determined by the requirements of the discipline and the individual project, that an attempt should be made to avoid unnecessary resubmissions for the same project, but that Council should not place itself in a position of feeling obliged to fund any project beyond some maximum time.

RECOMMENDATION 10

THAT COUNCIL BE OPEN TO APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH OF ANY DURATION, AS DETERMINED BY THE REQUIREMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR DISCIPLINE.

RECOMMENDATION 11

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES BE REQUESTED TO ALLOCATE A PROPORTION OF THEIR BUDGET ENVELOPES TO LONG TERM RESEARCH, THIS PROPORTION TO BE DETERMINED BY EACH COMMITTEE ON THE BASIS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLINE.

RECOMMENDATION 12

THAT GRANTS BE AWARDED FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS, ON THE BASIS OF THE MERITS OF SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR LONG-TERM FUNDING.

RECOMMENDATION 13

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES MAKE DECISIONS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, REPEAT APPLICATIONS FOR THE SAME PROJECT WITHIN A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD.

Major Research Grants

This topic overlaps the previous one somewhat, in that large-scale research tends often also to be of long duration. Much of what has been said in the previous section also applies to large-scale research.

The immediate issue, however, is whether it is appropriate to continue the current distinction between major and regular research grants. This distinction is based on dollar value of the project, with all projects requesting more than \$100,000 for one year or \$250,000 over three years being placed into the major research grants category. This category involves a much more intricate assessment and adjudication procedure, characterized by more external assessments than typical for smaller grants, the possibility of site visits, and an additional stage of adjudication in which the chairs of the

regular adjudication committees confer on projects which have survived a first round of discussion within the appropriate committees. A separate budgetary envelope is also allocated for major research grants.

Following the previous line of argument, the committee feels that the requirements of the discipline and of the individual project, rather than any arbitrary limits, should determine Council's approach to research grants. At the same time, it is desirable to avoid distortions in the regular budget envelopes due to exceptionally large requests. A separate allocation of funds to major research grants is thus required. For obvious reasons, such an allocation would have to be interdisciplinary rather than within disciplines. It also seems appropriate to allow for more intense assessment, as committees judge necessary, for such requests. Finally, Council should try to avoid the rather open-ended commitments which have characterized the former program of negotiated grants.

With these considerations in mind, the committee believes that a form of major research grants program should be retained. This should be regarded as a subprogram of research grants rather than as a separate program, in order to emphasize that the objectives remain the same. While recognizing that large-scale research may have quite different meanings, and quite different price tags in different disciplines, some budgetary limit is necessary to distinguish the category and permit the allocation of a separate envelope of funds. In this respect, the existing limits seem reasonable, in that few projects extend beyond these limits. The only modification suggested is one which makes the budgeting limitations consistent with the five-year perspective being advocated throughout this discussion.

As for assessment and adjudication, it would be desirable to give committee chairs some discretion in deciding how many assessments would be required. Similarly, it would be helpful to allow committees to assign projects on the margin to the major research grants category, especially if it appeared that budgets just under the limits were being presented to avoid the more rigorous scrutiny of major research grants. In view of recommendations on the conduct of adjudication meetings, to be presented later, it is felt that there will be no further need for a separate meeting of committee chairs, or a delay of several months in rendering a decision. Instead, it is proposed that major research grants applications be processed through to completion during the normal adjudication period.

RECOMMENDATION 14

THAT MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS, WITH A MINIMUM BUDGET OF \$100,000 FOR ONE YEAR, \$250,000 FOR THREE YEARS OR \$400,000 FOR FIVE YEARS, BE CONTINUED AS A CATEGORY OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 15

THAT AWARDS FOR PERIODS UP TO FIVE YEARS BE MADE UNDER THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS CATEGORY, WITH A SPECIFIC STATEMENT TO THE APPLICANT THAT THERE IS NO FURTHER COMMITMENT TO FUNDING BEYOND THIS PERIOD.

RECOMMENDATION 16

THAT COMMITTEE CHAIRS HAVE DISCRETION AS TO THE NUMBER OF EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS TO BE SOUGHT FOR MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS, AND THAT COMMITTEES MAY SUGGEST TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT OTHER PROCEDURES WHICH THEY DEEM NECESSARY TO SECURE ADEQUATE ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION 17

THAT COMMITTEES HAVE THE POWER TO SHIFT INTO THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS CATEGORY APPLICATIONS WHICH ARE CLOSE TO THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS LIMITS, IN TERMS OF AMOUNTS REQUESTED.

RECOMMENDATION 18

THAT THE ADJUDICATION OF MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS NORMALLY BE COMPLETED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REGULAR ADJUDICATION SYSTEM.

Support of Research Time

The practice of awarding research time stipends (RTS) was introduced into the Research Grants program in 1980. Under this practice, applicants could be awarded an amount in support of research time from teaching to pursue research. The basis of the award was replacement of the researcher's salary, with no limits other than amount of time which could be claimed in a particular period.

Judging by demand, this was a highly popular innovation. By the time the practice was suspended in 1982, for budgetary reasons, nearly one-third of all applications requested research time, with the cost approaching one-third of the total budget. (It should be noted, however, that adjudication committees appear to have been somewhat skeptical of requests for the RTS, as the success rate in this area was rather less than for the program as a whole.) Some have argued that, in the perverse manner in which the SSHRC treats its clientele, such a popular program was inevitably short-lived. More realistically, however, the suspension of the program was obviously brought about because increases in available funds came nowhere near to meeting the increased pressure on the budget brought about by research time stipends. In retrospect, it is clear that the program was overly generous, since universities could usually replace researchers with part-time or sessional appointees at much lower cost than the amount paid for a research time stipend.

More fundamentally, of course, it is necessary to ask whether additional time is required for most research, given that teaching workloads for university scholars are designed to allow substantial time for research. In general, for example, university professors teach less than half the time of their colleagues in secondary schools, technical colleges, or other institutions. Nominally, professors are expected to spend about one-third of their time on research. Research time under research grants therefore need only be provided for the amount required by a project in addition to this expectation.

Despite this argument, Adair and Davidson, in their study of the productivity of scholars in the social sciences, found that lack of time was cited as the major impediment to the conduct of research. On the humanities side, strong arguments have been presented that the time of the scholar is a better investment of research funds than time for research assistants or other forms of expenditure. In fact, some have made the case that failure to support the time of principal investigators limits research to the sort that can be done by assistants.

Certainly, it may be argued that many projects do require such time, especially if the research requires absence from campus during teaching terms. The model whereby research is expected to be conducted during the summer is certainly not applicable in all cases. Equally important, research time could allow projects to proceed much faster or could help ensure that important aspects of a project be carried out by the researcher rather than by assistants. The argument about accelerating research seems to be the one which has prevailed in the retention of research time awards in the Strategic Grants program, a point which is not lost on some members of the academic community. In the case of scholars who do not hold regular university appointments, a research time stipend may be the only source of income or the only way in which any research time could be obtained (research time stipends have, in fact, been retained for such scholars).

In practice, we have no information on the effects of research time stipends on the conduct of research, nor could such information be easily obtained. Nevertheless, the above arguments are as persuasive as any others for support of research through a grants program. In fact, some have argued that time for the researcher is the most important ingredient in any program of research support. On the other hand, despite the popularity of the practice when it was in place, the scholarly community is not of one mind as to its reinstatement. Of those who do support reinstatement, the prevailing view is that this should be done only if additional funds become available.

The Committee has also considered the question of the relationship of research time stipends to the Leave Fellowships Program. While there was no specific mandate to consider this program, the Committee was of the view that any move to reinstate research time stipends could not be made in isolation from leave fellowships.

The research cost component of leave fellowships clearly serves the same purpose as research grants, in assisting the scholar with travel and related costs of conducting research while on sabbatical leave. At the same time, this component is both more restrictive and more generous than a research grant. On the one hand, leave fellowships provide for the cost of family travel, which is not available under research grants, while, on the other hand, expenses other than travel are severely restricted unless the leave fellowship holder also applies for a research grant. There is an obvious argument for placing eligible research expenses on the same basis, whatever the specific program.

We now come to the most difficult part of the argument. It is difficult to see how the major component of that program, the topping-up of salaries, serves any research purpose. Presumably, the condition of a sabbatical leave is that the scholar conduct research. It is not clear why most universities have a policy of reduced salaries for faculty members while on sabbatical. However, the reasons are no doubt economic rather than academic. A scholar may argue, of course, that the salary provision of a leave fellowship removes the need to take up other paid employment during a sabbatical, to supplement a research program with personal resources, or to reduce the period of tenure away from home. However, provision can be made for the deduction of research costs from income, thus giving substantial tax advantages to the sabbaticant. Many universities have provision for the award of grants in lieu of salary. Since such grants are non-taxable, and since they can be used to

cover costs such as family travel, the advantages of this procedure can be sufficient to offset any loss of income involved in the conduct of research during a sabbatical leave. We are not certain how many scholars use this provision or whether it is promoted within the universities. Nevertheless, the practice is established.

Subsidizing salaries during sabbatical leaves places this Council in a vulnerable position in a number of ways. First, this amounts to differentially supporting the costs to universities in providing sabbaticals, since not all universities have the same sabbatical salary policies. Second, our sister Councils, even with their much more generous budgets, have no such program. Third, as argued above, Council is paying costs which can be met in other ways. In our view, the argument that research requirements in the disciplines served by this Council are quite different from those in the natural sciences and medicine cannot be used to justify a program of salary subsidies under these conditions. Finally, there is an obvious problem of public image in having a program which leads to personal gain for the researcher.

Certain of these points illustrate that leave fellowships are closely linked to research grants in general. On balance, the committee has come to the view that there is no compelling reason to distinguish research conducted during sabbatical leave from other research, especially in terms of time demands. The time during a sabbatical may be considered part of the total time available to a scholar for research. Similarly, other research expenses during sabbatical are, in principle, no different from research expenses at any other time.

Returning to the immediate question of research time, the committee has concluded that a modest program of research time awards would be useful, and that there is no need to have a separate program for sabbatical leaves. It is therefore suggested that a single program of research time awards be established under the Research Grants program, that this program allow costs of replacement teaching rather than salary replacement, and that certain limits be established (to avoid excessive pressure on the budget) on the amount of time that will be subsidized.

Within these limits, costs of of a full term or even a full year of leave could be subsidized at the replacement value, but such leaves would be considered separate from normal sabbaticals. Alternatively, applicants could request support for relief for one or more courses for a term, or a year, as determined by the nature of the research project. Salary supplements for sabbaticals would be discontinued and the savings used to augment the research grants budget. Research time, along with other eligible costs, would be requested under the regulations of the Research Grants program and not under separate, and more generous, regulations as is now the case for leave fellowships.

It must be recognized, of course, that any move to redefine research time which is seen as impinging on leave fellowships will meet with strong objections in the community. The quid pro quo is, of course, the availability of research leave at any time, not just during sabbaticals. In fact, the new proposals would have the effect of allowing a researcher an additional full year's leave within the normal seven-year period. Stipends could be used to provide, where appropriate, two consecutive years of research time, when used in conjunction with normal sabbaticals. This should be quite attractive to some

scholars embarking on major research programs. Whether this will be sufficient to offset adverse reaction is not clear. It would obviously be advantageous if scholars were made more aware of the possibilities for tax deductibility of sabbatical research expenses. However, it is doubtful if Council could take an active role in this. In any case, it is obviously not defensible to maintain a program with expense provisions which are substantially more generous than those of other programs serving the same purpose, whatever the reaction.

RECOMMENDATION 19

THAT THE PRACTICE OF AWARDING SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH TIME BE REINSTATED, ON THE BASIS OF THE COST PER COURSE OF REPLACEMENT TEACHING, USING A STANDARD RATE TO AVOID PROBLEMS OF DIFFERING SALARY RATES AMONG THE UNIVERSITIES.

RECOMMENDATION 20

THAT LEAVE FELLOWSHIPS BE DISCONTINUED AS A SEPARATE CATEGORY OF AWARDS, AND THAT FUNDS CURRENTLY ALLOCATED TO LEAVE FELLOWSHIPS BE ADDED TO THE BUDGET FOR THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 21

THAT SABBATICANTS WHO WISH TO APPLY FOR RESEARCH EXPENSES WHICH WILL BE INCURRED DURING THEIR SABBATICAL LEAVE BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO UNDER THE RULES OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 22

THAT SUPPORT OF RESEARCH TIME, AS INDICATED IN RECOMMENDATION 19, BE CONSIDERED AS COMPLEMENTARY TO SABBATICAL LEAVE PROVISIONS OF UNIVERSITIES. THIS COULD ALLOW A SCHOLAR TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF RESEARCH TIME WHERE APPROPRIATE.

One consequence of the above recommendations needs to be explicitly recognized. Since sabbaticants would no longer be eligible for salary supplements, no personal benefit can accrue to the scholar as a result of his or her research. Similarly, no support is intended for family travel under the Research Grants program. Sabbaticants will thus lose two very attractive features of the current program. This must be defended on the grounds that Council support is not intended for personal gain, and that there must be consistent rules for research support. If universities, for whatever reasons, fail to allow full salary while a scholar is on sabbatical leave, Council ought not to override this policy with salary supplements. The provision for family travel is even more questionable, as it is not allowed under other Council programs, does not exist in other councils, and presents major problems of public image. The major considerations for Council in withdrawal of a program which enjoys such wide support in the community are its effect on the conduct of research and on equity of treatment of members of the clientele. Since no real inequities are created and some, in fact, are removed, and since the effect on research is judged to be minimal and is offset by other advantages in awarding research time support, Council should be prepared, in this case, to defend strongly its position in the face of whatever adverse reaction might occur.

General Research Grants (GRG)

Under this program, Council awards block grants to universities for support of small research projects having budgets under \$2,500. Requests for support of such projects are thus not entertained under the Research Grants program. The basis for awards to individual universities was originally a formula taking into account the amount awarded the university under the Research Grants program. More recently, increases for inflation have been applied to the total award for each university but no new formula calculation has been made, and no increase has been made for some years in the maximum grant which may be given under the program.

The GRG program has recently undergone a regular evaluation (by Professor Bruce McFarlane). Following this evaluation, a staff report was presented to Council recommending substantial changes in the program, especially in the direction of increasing the support of more productive universities. This report was received by Council at its December, 1984, meeting, at which time the matter was referred to this committee for further deliberation.

In the committee's view, the GRG program interacts with the Research Grants program in two major ways. First, it can be seen as a means of removing from the latter program applications which would be uneconomical to process. Second, and more important, it can be an instrument of research policy, in that it may allow small grants to be awarded under a different, and perhaps more flexible, set of rules than larger ones.

On the first point, there has been considerable debate over the merits of increasing the current limit of \$2,500 below which applications will not be accepted under the Research Grants program. The arguments for and against raising the limit are well known. The level of \$2,500 was set some years ago and has never been adjusted for inflation, even though the total budget allocated to the program, and the amount awarded each university, has been increased regularly. This alone would seem to be an argument for an increase. On the other hand, many scholars appear to prefer to have their applications judged by the standards of the national competition, and especially through the external peer review system. Also, the limit would have to be raised substantially to have a significant impact on administrative workload. Views within the universities seem to be divided on whether an increase in the limit is desirable. Some see this as imposing an additional administrative burden, while others would welcome the additional freedom this would allow. Finally, there is the argument that there is little uniformity in procedures used by the universities and no clear consistency in the uses made of the funds available, so that Council funds are being used in a manner which does not allow sufficiently strict control.

Assuming that the budget allocated to GRGs would otherwise be available for the Research Grants program, there are several possibilities for allocation of such funds. First, the limit on individual grants could be increased without increasing the total funds made available, to the point where the limits on individual grants would match the increase in total budget over the years. Second, the budget for GRGs could be increased by the amount saved in research grants through raising the GRG limit. There could be an increase (or a decrease, for that matter) in total GRG funding without changing the individual grant limit. The total budget for GRGs could be increased to meet

anticipated demand within any new grant limit established. Finally, there could be a recalculation of the way in which awards are made to individual universities, independent of any overall budget change.

One of the most obvious features of the interface between GRGs and research grants is the substantial discontinuity created at the \$2,500 grant limit. The current budget of approximately \$1.8M for GRGs can support upwards of 1,000 projects annually of \$2,500 or a little less. This is almost twice as many as supported under the entire regular Research Grants program. In fact, some universities appear to stretch the available funds even further by rarely giving awards up to the maximum allowed. The breadth of use of the GRG program can be placed in perspective by noting that the number of projects under \$2,500 supported by this program is more than twenty-fold the number in the range of \$2,500-\$5,000 supported under the Research Grants program, and more than double the number supported under the entire Research Grants program. The discontinuity between the two programs is thus a glaring one. It is difficult to imagine that the real world of research naturally contains such a discontinuity. It is much more likely that persons applying to internal university competitions involving the use of GRG funds simply adjust their demands to the known limit. In effect, the limit imposes partial funding on the GRG program. For the Research Grants program, the opposite effect is possible, whereby those who take the trouble to apply ensure that they ask for enough to make the effort worthwhile. If, indeed, as many scholars have argued, much good research can be conducted on small budgets, then the Research Grants program does not seem to be the appropriate vehicle for support of such research, as few scholars apply for small grants. On the other hand, the GRG program seems well suited to support of this kind.

If the real demand in the \$2,500-5,000 range were, indeed, what is now reflected in the Research Grants program, only about \$150,000 would have to be transferred to GRGs to relieve research grants of all applications in this range. Even the \$5,000-10,000 range involves less than one million dollars. It is likely, however, that raising the limit on individual grants from the GRG pool would substantially increase the demand for grants within the new range. This is not necessarily undesirable. Certainly this would have the effect of supporting many more scholars than now supported at the lower end of the Research Grants program. On the other hand, if universities began to make awards up to the new limit, the effect would be fewer but larger projects funded under the GRG program. It does not seem desirable to require universities to operate under the same principle of "essential funding" as the Research Grants program, as this would reduce the flexibility which is one of the positive features of GRGs. Nevertheless, there is reason to argue that universities should consider making at least some awards near the upper limit, to reduce the degree of discontinuity between the two programs.

The alternative of increasing the budget of the GRG program to meet the potential demand is obviously not feasible. Assuming that doubling the upper limit, for example, would double the demand within the universities, an additional \$1.8M would have to be found, while the Research Grants program would be relieved of only about \$150,000 in pressure on the budget. It would also hardly be feasible to increase the limit on individual grants while keeping the total budget constant. Although this would make the program more competitive, and bring it more into line with the Research Grants program, universities would

be unlikely to accept with equanimity the additional pressure that this would create. Furthermore, this would not help fulfill the aim of stimulating more small-scale research.

We are thus left with the alternative of increasing the GRG budget by the amount saved in research grants by changing the limit, or of some compromise between this and the anticipated demand. Doubling the limit at this time would perhaps approximate the inflationary increases in research costs since the \$2,500 limit was introduced. Increasing the limit still further, say to \$7,500, would begin to have an impact on the case load in the Research Grants program. There are two difficulties with too great an increase, however. First, many scholars appear to desire continued access to a national competition, even though their demands are small. Second, there is likely to be some adverse reaction in the universities to having to grant larger awards with only a nominal increase in budget, despite the fact that overall budgets have increased substantially since the individual grant limit was set at \$2,500. In fact, universities could easily defeat the purpose of the change by continuing to give awards much below the limit. The counterargument here is that universities have been receiving inflationary increases in the total budget over the years, to the point that, had the upper limit on grants been increased in the same proportion, the limit would now stand at about \$5,000 in any case. Any addition to the budget would thus put the program on a better footing than was the case when it began. Competition for funds would, indeed, become more intense within the universities, but this is consistent with what has happened to the Research Grants program over the period the GRGs have been in effect. The relief in file load in research grants would be small, but the effect on the conduct of research, and especially the discontinuity in scope of support, would be quite large. Accordingly, we recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 23

THAT THE UPPER LIMIT ON AWARDS TO BE MADE BY UNIVERSITIES UNDER THE GRG PROGRAM BE INCREASED TO \$5,000, AND THAT THIS AMOUNT BE SUBJECT TO PERIODIC REVIEW.

On a minor note, it seems reasonable to make adjustments in this amount only in increments of, say, \$500, and to do this every several years, to avoid confusion as to the new amount each year.

RECOMMENDATION 24

THAT APPLICATIONS FOR AMOUNTS UNDER \$5,000 NO LONGER BE ACCEPTED UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 25

THAT THE TOTAL CURRENT BUDGET FOR GRG'S BE INCREASED BY APPROXIMATELY \$1 MILLION PER YEAR.

The specific amount of the increase may be open to debate. The rationale for the figure given (aside from its neatness) is that it represents a compromise between an increase designed to meet the anticipated major increase in demand and one based strictly on a direct transfer of funds from research grants. This serves the important function of reducing the discontinuity which now exists in number of projects supported by GRGs and by the lower ranges of the Research Grants program. This does depend, however, on the universities' willingness to consider requests for amounts near the new limit, and on scholars taking advantage of the new limit.

A further point that needs to be addressed is the uses made within the universities of GRG funds. McFarlane has reported that there are three major uses of these funds; research, travel for research purposes, and travel to conferences. Within the research category, a further breakdown exists between "seed money," small scale research which can be completed under the grant, and ongoing small research programs not funded from other sources. Since these uses are somewhat broader than those allowed under the Research Grants program, it is relevant to ask whether the GRG program needs to be brought more into line with research grants.

Again, there are arguments on both sides. If GRGs are to be regarded simply as the lower end of the research grants spectrum, and as a convenient way of removing small applications from the elaborate review mechanism of the Research Grants program, then it follows that the two types of grants should be used for the same purposes. If, on the other hand, GRGs are considered as an adjunct to other SSHRC programs, as well as the Research Grants program, allowing universities to pursue their own research objectives, then few restrictions should be attached to the block of funds going to each university.

The committee is inclined toward the first view -- that GRGs are an extension of the Research Grants program. The funds available are simply not sufficient to allow the program to extend over the entire range of SSHRC activities. In any case, Council has its own programs for travel support and similar activities which accept applications within the same funding range as the GRGs. In suggesting that GRGs be treated as research grants, however, we are not suggesting that they be governed by rigid rules, only that they meet the objectives of supporting research rather than other activities.

RECOMMENDATION 26

THAT THE CONDITION FOR AWARD OF THE GRG IS THAT FUNDS BE USED TO FULFILL THE SAME BROAD OBJECTIVE AS THAT OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

Our final point on this issue concerns the formula under which GRGs are to be awarded. The original formula, whereby the size of the grant to a particular university was a function of that university's performance in the last regular research grants competition has not been used for some years. Instead, adjustments for inflation have been added to the amount yielded by the formula some years ago. With changes in the research performance of universities, the current amounts bear little relation to the original formula in a number of cases.

The committee considers the concept of GRGs based on performance in the Research Grants program to be a sound one, with the provision that the calculation be based on an average over several competitions rather than one only. This would smooth out any random fluctuations, and avoid the earlier problem of having to await the outcome of the last grants competition before the GRG award could be calculated.

RECOMMENDATION 27

THAT THE AMOUNT OF THE GRG AWARD TO A PARTICULAR UNIVERSITY CONSIST OF A BASE AMOUNT PLUS A FIXED PROPORTION OF THE AVERAGE AMOUNT AWARDED THAT UNIVERSITY UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM DURING THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS.

To ensure that the intent is clear, it is reiterated that this recommendation refers to the amount awarded the university under the Research Grants program only, and not under Strategic Grants or other Council programs.

Participation Rates

This issue is somewhat related to the General Research Grants, in that it is clear that the effect of the GRGs is to allow a much higher participation rate at the lower end of the funding range than is possible at higher levels. While this would be expected, the concern is that the transition is not a smooth one. More grants are awarded under the GRG program than under the whole Research Grants program, and many more than within the lower ranges of the latter program. While the proposed changes in GRGs are intended to address this gap, the issue of participation has broader implications, stemming from the objectives of the Research Grants program itself.

The broad objective discussed in an earlier section implies that the Research Grants program should attempt to attract a broad group of applicants, rather than cater to a small established group. The available evidence suggests that this is consistent with the desires of the scholarly community. Data on the pattern of applications, however, indicates that the program has been responsive to the requests of a relatively small group of repeat applicants, that new applicants are less likely to be successful, and that most applicants do not reapply. In any given year, applications are received from only about 7 per cent of eligible scholars, and only about half of these are successful. Survey data suggest that some 17 per cent of university scholars in the appropriate disciplines are grant holders at present. The Adair and Davidson report placed the level among social scientists as somewhat lower.

Overall, therefore, the data indicate that the level of participation is not especially broad. Certainly, in comparison to our sister Councils, participation rates are very low. Any attempt to increase the participation rate, however, will have certain important consequences. Unless there is a major increase in funding for the program, either the success rates will fall even lower than at present or it will be necessary to resort to large budget cuts for individual projects. Further depression of success rates will not accomplish the purpose of increasing participation as the total number of awards will not change. In fact, this may be counter-productive. There is little point in stimulating demand, only to be faced with even more disappointed applicants than at present.

Budget cutting for individual projects would serve to spread the available funds among more scholars. However, there is evidence that the community is strongly opposed to the idea of "partial funding" as practised by NSERC. This would also be inconsistent with the emphasis on project rather than person funding. Ironically, of course, it is the practice of partial funding which allows the GRGs to support such a broad base and which contributes to the discontinuity in support levels. It does appear that the community would support one variation of budget cutting, that of funding more short-term research. In fact, adjudication committees already appear to be engaged in this practice, in the interest of reducing forward commitments in the budget. However, we have essentially rejected this approach, especially to the extent that it leads to many unnecessary repeat applications.

One further alternative is available, and that is giving special status to first time applicants, at the expense of established scholars. This might be defended on the grounds of encouraging new talent, although this is not identified as an objective of the program. A more plausible defense might be that established scholars are likely to have greater access to other sources of funding. Certainly, according to our survey responses, such other sources are available. Under such a scheme, the marginal utility of research grants would increase, in that research by newer scholars is less likely to be done if they have limited access to the Research Grants program, whereas more senior scholars would find other means of carrying out their work.

It would seem that a combination of severity in budget scrutiny (short of drastic arbitrary cuts for all) and special status for first time applicants could serve to broaden the pool of applicants and give Council the basis for a modest program designed to encourage new applications. Such a program would also have the merit of providing an assessment of the amount of latent demand in the community, and perhaps ultimately the basis of an argument for increased budgetary allocations. There is evidence, especially in the case of Council's efforts in the field of education, that stimulative efforts can increase demand without detracting from the quality of proposals received.

It is therefore proposed that Council become more active in encouraging applications, especially from those who have not previously applied. This should be done through the provision of clear and intelligible materials on the program, staff contacts in the universities, some simplification of application procedures (more will be said on this point later), and maintaining a visible presence at meetings of scholarly societies.

RECOMMENDATION 28

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES BE ENJOINED TO GIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO FIRST-TIME APPLICATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM SCHOLARS AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREERS. IN PARTICULAR, COMMITTEES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEIR CONSIDERATION OF SCHOLARLY TRACK RECORD DOES NOT RESULT IN A BIAS AGAINST SUCH APPLICANTS.

Follow-up and Productivity

There are several aspects to this issue. First, there is the routine matter of ensuring that grant holders submit the required forms, progress reports and financial statements, seeing that subsequent installments of a grant are paid, and the like. Second is the matter of responding to enquiries from grant holders. These may be fairly routine, such as a request for transfer of funds from one budget category to another, or more substantive, involving changes in research plans. Third, there is the question of using information on an applicant's past grant history in judging subsequent applications. Finally, we must consider how to obtain and use data on productivity to obtain measures of overall effectiveness of the program. In practice, only the first two of these issues have been addressed within the Division. The absence of data on products has been pointed to in the Paquet-Taylor Report as one of the major obstacles to proper evaluation of the program.

In recent years, follow-up activities have been the responsibility of one officer assigned exclusively to this task. Aside from problems at the secretarial level, this seems to have functioned well in ensuring that the first follow-up function, and part of the second, is carried out. The follow-up officer has developed a system for flagging files requiring progress reports and a system of form letters to deal with most routine enquiries. Beyond this, however, the system is a reactive one, with relatively long response time. Requests requiring more than routine response, for example, now have two to three months response time. The officer has expressed the hope that this can be reduced to one month once staffing problems are solved (under current circumstances, however, this seems unlikely). There is no system in place for follow-up of final reports and financial statements, although progress has been made in ensuring that one grant is accounted for before another is issued. The officer has reported that there is sufficient work in reacting to reports which are submitted voluntarily, and no time for systematic follow-up of all grant holders:

One of the major sources of perceived inefficiency in the program has been response to enquiries involving budget changes or changes in research plans. A grant holder who has to wait two or three months to find out if travel to a different place is permitted or if funds may be used for word processing equipment rather than for a secretary, is understandably annoyed. Such events do not have to occur with any great frequency to cause difficulty. In the view of staff, part of this problem is that grant holders have not taken advantage of the new flexibility in budget transfers, and thus make many unnecessary enquiries. At the same time, part of the problem is obviously with the process itself. The follow-up officer is not especially visible to the community, whose contacts are mainly through the grants officers. Also, follow-up enquiries of a non-routine nature must still be referred to these officers for resolution.

A possible solution to the problem seems to lie in the separation of functions which are routine and initiatory from those which are non-routine and reactive. Flagging files requiring progress reports, as well as those for which final reports and financial statements are required should be no more than a clerical function. With further automation of files, it should be possible to have a monthly computer report on approaching deadlines, completion dates and the like, and routine letters produced for follow-up. Similarly, checks on whether previous files are in order before a new grant is issued should be no more than a routine function, aided by computerized record-keeping. It is understood that the records system is now being designed to do this, so that no specific recommendation on the point is required.

Enquiries from the field, of whatever sort, are perhaps better handled by the grants officers. While it has been argued that this would create inconsistencies in response, this problem can be overcome by developing standard responses to routine matters (much work has already been done on this by the follow-up officer). More substantive matters do not lend themselves to standard responses, in any case, and should be judged on individual merit. Eventually, it is likely that grant holders will become accustomed to increased budgetary flexibility (assuming that the trend in this direction is sustained), and will make fewer enquiries of this nature.

Having to respond to follow-up enquiries will obviously increase officer workload somewhat. Under existing circumstances, there appears to be sufficient scope in the system, especially in off-peak periods, to handle the volume of work. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to continue. In the committee's view, however, follow-up work is crucial to maintaining good relations in the research community, and therefore should not be sacrificed to other tasks, including assessment. One of the main reasons for proposing a streamlining of assessment procedures was to allow time for improved follow-up work, even in the face of overall staff reductions. Independently of such reductions, it is clear to the committee that some shift of responsibilities of officers toward follow-up is desirable. This move would allow officers to be in closer touch with their clients, and would increase the range of responsibilities for professional staff members who have seen some erosion of their positions over the years.

The aim of an improved follow-up system should be immediate turnaround on more routine requests for budget transfers and similar changes. Much of this could be done by telephone, with an appropriate logging of the nature of the request and the decision. No more than a few days should be required for a response to a written request unless this request is a matter requiring referral back to an adjudication committee. Officers should be given substantial scope to approve changes in research plans, within the overall aims of a project. It is especially worth noting that the Director of the Division, and the Director General, Program Branch, should be spared the task of deciding on individual cases as much as possible. It is also noted that other changes are to be suggested which should have the effect of reducing the number of follow-up decisions required.

RECOMMENDATION 29

THAT THE POLICY OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION BE TO RESPOND EXPEDITIOUSLY TO ENQUIRIES ON MATTERS OF BUDGET TRANSFERS, CHANGES IN RESEARCH PLANS, AND OTHER MATTERS NOT REQUIRING REFERRAL TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 30

THAT ALL DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH RESPONSE TO ENQUIRIES FROM AWARD HOLDERS, CURRENT APPLICANTS, AND PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS BE ASSUMED BY THE APPROPRIATE RESEARCH GRANTS OFFICER.

We now come to the third aspect of follow-up, that of using information about productivity in assessing subsequent requests for funding. We see this as presenting no major problem, as the previous grant history can be made available to adjudication committees and, indeed, is part of the overall track record of an applicant. Nevertheless, we do feel that grant history should be examined specifically and, in particular, that evidence on whether previous grants have yielded appropriate products is important. In fact, this is really the only control that exists on grant holders. It is understood that this is now being done more systematically than before. We are therefore simply reinforcing an emerging practice. It is noted that this does not have to lead to undue emphasis on person rather than project assessment, since we are not concerned here with overall track record, but rather with how previous Council funds were used. Elaborate follow-up procedures are not required here. The onus would be on the applicant to present the necessary evidence and on the adjudication

committee to judge the evidence. Again, it would be expected that routine information on an applicant's previous history of Council funding should be gathered as part of an automated record-keeping system. This should include award decisions, brief listings of publications and the like, as well as the regular information from the application form.

RECOMMENDATION 31

THAT APPLICANTS WHO HAVE HELD PREVIOUS GRANTS BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE OF THEIR USE OF SUCH AWARDS.

RECOMMENDATION 32

THAT THE RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEM BE DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY THE RESULTS OF PREVIOUS GRANTS, AND THAT THIS BECOME PART OF THE DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 33

THAT THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED UNDER ANY PREVIOUS COUNCIL GRANTS BE AN EXPLICIT CRITERION FOR JUDGING CURRENT APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS.

Finally, it is necessary to examine briefly the problem of gathering data useful in evaluating the program as a whole. As might be expected, the community does not seem to be overly concerned with this, as it does not bear on the immediate conduct of research. This does not diminish its importance, however. One of the most significant factors in the defense of publicly-funded research should be the ability of such research to enlighten the community as well as the individual scholar. The major difficulty in defending the budget requests of this Council is the absence of clear indicators of productivity. This exacerbates other disadvantages in the humanities and social sciences, in that much of the research in these areas does not yield obvious economic payoff, improved health, or similar outcomes which can easily generate public endorsement.

Follow-up of this sort presents difficult problems, as Professors Paquet and Taylor point out in their report. Certainly the data base for program evaluation is now virtually nonexistent, although there is a vast array of other data available on applicants. Here a new systematic procedure is required. At least a sample of all grant holders, not just repeat applicants, must be followed up regularly. Given problems of response rates and the inherent unreliability of self-report data of this sort, some means must also be found to judge the quality of the data provided. A purely quantitative approach, with emphasis on number of publications, citations, and the like, as emphasized by Paquet-Taylor, would be insufficient, especially in treating disciplines in which outcomes are long-term. Informed judgment by scholars in the discipline would be the most appropriate indicator of productivity, with quantitative measures being used in a supplementary manner.

The system suggested is one in which the grants officers assume responsibility for the initial follow-up and data collection, with the Policy and Planning Division carrying out the evaluative work. Data collection could involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and would be conducted as part of an overall scheme to have officers maintain contact with grant holders. Again, it is estimated that this activity could be absorbed by officers, once other procedures have been streamlined, and is one of the

justifications for streamlining. In particular, this activity would not be deadlinebound and could therefore be worked into convenient places in the annual calendar of events. Some initial work would be required to set up the data collection system, and considerable thought would have to be devoted to the exact type of data to be gathered, but once this has been done, the follow-up system should proceed almost routinely.

The largest task would fall to the Policy and Planning Division. Expert assistance would likely be required periodically to judge the quality of work performed and prepare the necessary reports. Given that periodic evaluations are required in any case, employing expert advisors to assess productivity could become a major part of such evaluations. One of the problems would be to find appropriate expertise without calling on scholars who have a vested interest in the program. The usual practice of contracting the task to a consulting firm would be questionable here, as more scholarly judgments would be required than is usual for program evaluation. Given our participation rates, however, it is reasonable to suggest that there are sufficient good scholars about, who do not have an immediate stake in the program, to act as evaluators.

RECOMMENDATION 34

THAT A SYSTEMATIC PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCEDURE, WITH EMPHASIS ON GATHERING AND INTERPRETING DATA ON PRODUCTIVITY OF SCHOLARS SUPPORTED UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM, BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY THE RESEARCH GRANTS AND POLICY AND PLANNING DIVISIONS, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE AUDIT AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE, AND THAT RESEARCH GRANTS OFFICERS ASSUME PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR DATA COLLECTION, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.

Appeals

We finally come to an issue which does not require lengthy discussion. The committee early came to the view that an elaborate appeals system is not required, given the nature of the adjudication system. In particular, it would be inappropriate to establish a procedure which removes appealed cases from the regular competition, since there would then be no basis for the ranking of such projects.

Appeal cases may be divided into the two categories. The applicant may feel that his/her proposal has not been treated in the normal manner, or that some flaw has occurred in the process itself. Examples would be the loss of relevant documentation, failure to include the case in some stage of the process, or similar errors. The second kind of appeal is against the decision itself. The applicant may feel that inappropriate assessors were selected, that the committee was not competent to judge the case, that assessments were poorly done, and so on.

The committee believes that the system is sufficiently well developed that the first kind of appeal will almost always prove to be groundless. Such appeals, in any case, are fairly readily investigated at the staff level. In particular, it is suggested that the Director of the Division assume responsibility for such investigations. If the case is found to have merit, the chairperson of the adjudication committee could be consulted to determine

whether, had the process been correct, the application would have succeeded in the appropriate competition. Funds could no doubt be found to redress the occasional case of this sort.

In the case of more substantive appeals, the procedure should be one of resubmission in the next competition. This is necessary to provide a basis for a normative decision, avoiding the problem of giving appealed cases special status through their removal from a competitive situation. Obviously, such cases would require further assessment and further committee deliberation, but this would likely be required in any type of appeal system. Applicants should be asked to address any specific criticisms made in the committee report and to give reasons for any argument about assessor or committee competence. These would have to be taken into account in subsequent choice of assessors. Some difficulties might arise if a committee has to act on an appeal based on querying its competence. However, committees are generally sufficiently broadly based, and enjoy sufficient support, to withstand an occasional case of this sort.

RECOMMENDATION 35

THAT APPEALS BASED ON FAILURE TO FOLLOW PROPER PROCEDURE IN PROCESSING AN APPLICATION BE INVESTIGATED, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION, WHO WOULD CONSULT THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE CHAIR AS NECESSARY.

RECOMMENDATION 36

BECAUSE OF THE COMPETITIVE NATURE OF THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS NO APPEALS ARE POSSIBLE ON SUBSTANTIVE GROUNDS. APPLICANTS WHO RECEIVE AN UNFAVOURABLE DECISION MAY RESUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS AT THE NEXT COMPETITION, WITH REVISIONS AS APPROPRIATE. SUCH APPLICATIONS WILL BE ADJUDICATED IN THE NORMAL WAY.

Committee Envelopes

Council members will recall that the current system of envelopes based on total demand within disciplines was put into place as a simple alternative to a series of other suggestions made at the time the competition was first introduced. The major alternative proposed was smaller envelopes based on demand, with a cushion of funds to take care of marginal cases and to avoid arbitrary uniform success rates across disciplines. Other alternatives are possible, of course, ranging from no prior allocations by discipline, to variations in the basis on which envelopes are calculated (i.e. envelopes may be based on historical demand, previous success rates, judgment of the needs of a discipline, and so on). It would be far too tedious to attempt an analysis of all of these alternatives here. Rather we shall concentrate on the current procedure, along with the alternative of no envelopes at all. The latter has recently been suggested by staff as a means of overcoming some of the shortcomings of the existing procedure.

One of the consequences of the current system is that it forces a uniform success rate across all disciplines, even though the historical pattern, under non-competitive conditions, was widely different success rates. It is not clear whether Council intended that introduction of the current envelope system

lead to such a major policy shift. It seems, however, from Council discussions at the time, that the procedure was adopted more for its simplicity than for its policy implications. It is also not known whether the previous pattern was a result of differences in the relative stringency of committee judgments or differences in the overall quality of applications.

Some have argued that the current procedure lends itself to the submission of spurious applications within a discipline, in order to boost demand and hence increase the envelope. This, however, would require that someone (perhaps a society) orchestrate a high profile activity which many scholars would find morally repugnant. Furthermore, committees could no doubt detect the existence of such applications. Certainly, committees, when faced with what they perceive as a low quality batch of applications, have remained parsimonious in approving projects, to the extent of occasionally not spending the allocated envelopes. There thus seems to be no reason for concern about artificially inflated demand within a discipline.

The more important point is whether allowing variation in the quality of the lower ranked funded projects across disciplines is a desirable, or even acceptable, policy. In terms of our earlier analysis of errors, the question is whether it is reasonable to expect more false positives in one discipline than another, because of variation in the quality of projects funded at the margin. The current system favours high demand disciplines, at least to the point where all acceptable applications in such disciplines are funded. The system also favours developing disciplines, at the expense of their more stable counter-parts. It may be argued that some credit is due disciplines whose members participate at a high or an expanding rate. Certainly this is preferable to preserving the historical status quo by using past success rates as a criterion. As long as there is no great risk that success rates will climb to the point where there are many false positives, some variation in quality across disciplines seems acceptable.

Under the alternative of no budget envelopes for committees, the relative roles of committees and staff would be quite different from the present ones. Under this alternative, the work of a committee would be considered complete when all applications had been ranked (or placed into categories such as "definitely accept", "accept if funds available", and so on), and budgets determined on the basis of the "essential funding" principle. It would be left to staff to attempt to find a cutoff point in the rankings which would fit the available budget. This procedure would avoid such problems as some committees failing to spend their envelopes while others being short of funds, and the practice of some committees of trading off large budget projects against smaller ones. More broadly, this would free committees entirely of the problem of fitting their decisions to available funds. This entire process would take place at the staff level once all adjudications had been completed. This, of course, would add substantially to staff workload, something we would wish to avoid under current circumstances.

After considering these and other alternatives, including that of having Council simply make a judgment of the needs of various disciplines, the committee has taken what may seem to be the easy way out, and has come to the view that it is desirable to include features of both procedures, by making nominal allocations to committees but retaining a pool of funds for further distribution, on the basis of lists of applications for consideration if funds

are available. Such a pool could also be allocated immediately to a committee facing an unusually high quality batch of applications. Similarly, funds could be withdrawn from a committee which appeared not to require its total allocation (this does have implications for the timing of committee meetings -- a point which will be pursued in a subsequent section). It is thought that the reserve pool of funds should be relatively small at the beginning, but could be adjusted with experience. Finally, it would be desirable to base the calculation of demand on an average over several competitions, to avoid anomalies due to severe fluctuations in number of applications from one competition to another.

RECOMMENDATION 37

THAT FUNDS CONTINUE TO BE ALLOCATED TO COMMITTEES ON THE BASIS OF DEMAND, BUT THAT A SMALL RESERVE POOL OF FUNDS BE RETAINED FOR REALLOCATION AS A COMPETITION PROCEEDS AND FOR SUPPORT OF PROJECTS PLACED ON A SUPPLEMENTARY LIST BY THE ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 38

THAT THE SIZE OF THE ENVELOPE FOR EACH COMMITTEE BE BASED ON A MOVING AVERAGE OF TOTAL DOLLAR DEMAND WITHIN THE COMMITTEE OVER THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS.

Operational Procedures

We finally come to a cluster of more minor issues on the operation of the program. Those who have persisted to this point will be relieved to know that these bear only brief discussion, as most of the conclusions follow from what has already been said.

The first question is that of submission deadlines and the timing of adjudication meetings. There has been substantial discussion recently about the possibility of moving to a single annual competition. This would have a number of academic and administrative advantages. Academically, this would avoid the problem of different intensities in the competition within one year, as demand is matched to available funds. Also, a larger pool of applications would provide a broader base for judging quality. Administratively, there would be need for only one round of committee meetings per year, resulting in considerable cost savings. Also, the process of assessor selection would have to be carried out only once. Finally, the Director of the Division would be relieved of the responsibility of estimating the demand in each competition in order to divide the annual budget. The major disadvantages would be decreased flexibility for scholars in when to apply, and an even greater concentration of workload than now exists. It should also be noted that scholars would prefer the current two competitions to other alternatives (including more frequent competitions).

On balance, the advantages seem to outweigh the drawbacks in this case. Accordingly, we recommend:

RECOMMENDATION 39

THAT THERE BE A SINGLE ANNUAL COMPETITION FOR RESEARCH GRANTS, WITH AN APPLICATION DEADLINE OF OCTOBER 15 AND WITH DECISIONS TO BE RENDERED BY MARCH 31.

It is noted that the specific application deadline is a matter of academic convenience, and of coordination with other Council deadlines. What is most important here is, of course, the timing of the decision. The application deadline must be as far in advance of this as necessary to complete the procedure. The survey of scholars revealed that the most convenient month for starting research, by far, is May. Under the current two competitions per year, the most convenient months for submission would be May and November. The latter submission date is obviously appropriate to a Spring decision.

The earlier recommendation on the possibility of redistributing committee envelopes as the competition proceeds requires that all committees meet simultaneously. This is also desirable for other reasons, especially since it allows a broad range of expertise to be assembled to facilitate consultation, shifting of cases among committees, discussions among committee chairs, final adjudication of major grant applications, and so on. While this no doubt would create problems of space and staffing, the advantages seem to make it worth attempting to solve such problems.

RECOMMENDATION 40

THAT ALL ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS BE SCHEDULED
FOR THE SAME TIME.

As already mentioned, the move to a single competition has implications for the distribution of staff workload. This raises the more general question of staff deployment and the prospect of staff reductions. For its own part, the committee does not believe that overall staff reductions are desirable. Rather, a redistribution of tasks, with greater emphasis on follow-up and analysis, is required. At the same time, it does not believe the Research Grants Division should be protected from reductions which are externally imposed. Indeed, the recommendations on assessment and adjudication were made with such reductions in mind. While the committee does not wish to make detailed suggestions on what is essentially a management problem, certain recommendations along these lines might be helpful.

RECOMMENDATION 41

THAT STAFF BE REDEPLOYED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT PERSONNEL
ARE NOT ASSIGNED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION
BUT ARE AVAILABLE FOR OTHER ASSIGNMENTS.

RECOMMENDATION 42

THAT MANAGEMENT CONSIDER THE COORDINATION OF ADJUDICATION
SCHEDULES IN ALL PROGRAMS TO ACHIEVE AN OVERALL BALANCE
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, AND THAT STAFF BE ASSIGNED AS NECESSARY
TO ACCOMMODATE PEAK WORKLOADS IN A DIVISION AND TO SHORTEN
TURNAROUND TIMES FOR APPLICATIONS.

We now come to a point which is rather unrelated to the preceding ones, but which takes us back to the issue of follow-up. Recent changes in the Guide for Applicants have provided greater flexibility to applicants in their use of funds. With the increased emphasis on productivity, and the prospect of continued stringency in budget scrutiny, it seems reasonable to reinforce the idea of allowing award holders to reallocate budget items. In fact, even greater scope in this area might be desirable, as grant holders are made more accountable in terms of products. The fact that scholars seem not to be taking

full advantage of the current provisions is seen as a carry-over from the earlier highly regulated system, and not as a reflection of a true desire to obtain approval for such changes.

RECOMMENDATION 43

THAT GRANT HOLDERS BE GIVEN DISCRETION TO TRANSFER FUNDS FROM ONE BUDGET CATEGORY TO ANOTHER, WITHIN OVERALL REGULATIONS ON ALLOWABLE EXPENSES, PROVIDED THAT THIS ENTAILS NO MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES.

RECOMMENDATION 44

THAT PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN RESEARCH PLANS BE REFERRED TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES FOR DECISION, WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRS HAVING DISCRETION TO CONFER WITH OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS AS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE CASES ARISING BETWEEN REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

The committee has considered one further point related to how grant holders use their budgets. This is the question of whether existing regulations establishing maximum rates for salaries, travel, and other expenses are justified. On the one hand, these rates have the advantage of ensuring that grants for equivalent projects would be the same size wherever the researcher is located. On the other, this causes administrative problems for universities, in dealing with a set of rates different from their normal ones. More important, maximum salary allowances are often lower than those which must be paid by universities under collective agreements or under particular market conditions. Certainly, abolishing fixed rates and replacing these with whatever rates are allowed by an applicant's university would substantially simplify budgeting for the applicant and significantly reduce the amount of detail required in regulations, not to mention the amount of follow-up work required.

RECOMMENDATION 45

THAT THE CURRENT REGULATIONS ON ALLOWABLE RATES FOR VARIOUS RESEARCH EXPENSES BE REMOVED AND REPLACED BY A STATEMENT THAT GRANT HOLDERS MUST CONFORM TO THE EXPENDITURE REGULATIONS OF THEIR OWN UNIVERSITIES. UNIVERSITIES WOULD BE EXPECTED TO CERTIFY THIS IN THEIR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL.

A number of other issues surrounding the functioning of adjudication committees have been considered. The most important of these are: 1) the need to ensure balance in committee membership across subdisciplines and schools of thought; 2) whether the policy of not allowing current grant applicants to serve on committees should be reconsidered; 3) how to address problems arising from interdisciplinary applications or those which do not fall neatly into one of the regular committees; and 4) the need for committee meetings outside the regular adjudication sessions.

On the first point, little needs to be said except that under the proposed revisions in assessment procedures it becomes more important than before to ensure that committees have the necessary expertise, and the appropriate affinity with various branches of the discipline, research methods, or theoretical outlooks. This will likely require that some committees be enlarged, but otherwise seems to present no major difficulty, and thus requires no specific recommendation.

There are strong arguments on both sides of the issue of whether grant applicants should be permitted to serve on committees. On the one hand, the current policy removes any possibility of real or perceived conflict of interest and any possible embarrassment of committee members. At the same time, the policy has seriously restricted the recruitment and retention of competent committee members, and has led to considerable instability in committees as one or more members often must withdraw entirely for the duration of a competition. Given the added problems of committee structure imposed by the proposals in this report, it was originally thought advisable to relax the current policy, with appropriate safeguards to avoid committee members being involved in discussion of their own cases or, it might be added, the cases of close colleagues. However, subsequent discussion in Council has persuaded us that the issue of conflict of interest, especially in light of changes to assessment and adjudication procedures, overrides the pragmatic reasons for allowing committee members to apply during their tenure on the committee. Accordingly, we recommend:

RECOMMENDATION 46

THAT THE CURRENT POLICY OF NOT ALLOWING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO APPLY FOR GRANTS BE MAINTAINED.

A number of those responding to the committee's questions were concerned with interdisciplinary applications, and especially those for which no obvious committee exists. The committee considered and rejected the suggestion that a special structure be established for such applications, on the grounds that no group of scholars could be assembled which would be capable of dealing with the range of cases which fall outside regular committee expertise. Such cases are obvious ones for which greater reliance should be placed on external assessors. Beyond this, it is thought that, with simultaneous committee meetings, subgroups might be formed, referrals made to other committees as necessary, or consultations among committee chairs might occur, which would satisfactorily resolve most such cases.

RECOMMENDATION 47

THAT APPLICATIONS INVOLVING PROJECTS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE, OR OTHER PROJECTS WHICH CANNOT BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED WITH A SPECIFIC COMMITTEE, BE ADJUDICATED THROUGH INTER-COMMITTEE COORDINATION DURING REGULAR ADJUDICATION MEETINGS.

On the final question of the need for advance meetings, what is envisaged is a group of adjudication committees acting much more as standing committees than is now the case, with committee chairs remaining in touch with members throughout the year, as assessors are sought, policy issues occur or cases arise requiring consultation. Once the system is in place, there should be no need for meetings of full committees other than for regular adjudication sessions. However, committee chairs might meet at least once a year outside the adjudication setting, to establish ground rules, discuss differences between disciplines, select assessors, and prepare for the main session. Such sessions would not be especially difficult to organize, and should contribute substantially to making the system function smoothly.

We now come to our final few points. Perhaps fittingly, these are relatively minor issues of simplification of procedures. The committee is of the belief that it is possible to bring about a further reduction in the length

of project descriptions, despite the continued emphasis on judging a project rather than a person. If there is any substance in the complaint that an applicant must almost write the final report of a project before a grant is awarded, this problem should be reduced by simply requiring that shorter project descriptions be submitted. An arbitrary limit imposes no unfairness in a competitive environment, as long as all applicants are placed under the same restrictions.

RECOMMENDATION 48

THAT PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS NORMALLY NOT EXCEED 3,000 WORDS.

In addition to the project description itself, preparation and processing of an application requires a variety of forms, such as those for ethics review, budget, curriculum vitae, assessor rating, notice of award, and so on. The committee has noted that efforts are underway to simplify forms as far as possible. Aside from being wary of recommendations which might add further forms, we have not, therefore, examined the question of forms in detail. Suffice it to say that we would wish to see the process of form simplification continue.

The committee has also been aware that efforts have been underway to prepare a revision of the Guide for Applicants. Obviously, this process can proceed only so far until Council has decided on the disposition of the recommendations of this report. Nevertheless, it is suggested that a simplified Guide is one of the keys to overall streamlining of the program. It is hoped that a new edition of the Guide can be prepared expeditiously once Council has completed its deliberations on the report.

CONCLUSIONS

The task of the Special Committee on Research Grants was to carry out a complete review of the Research Grants program and to formulate options for its future. The review was conducted against a background of ever-increasing constraints on resources to administer the program, coupled with concern in the scholarly community about certain aspects of its functioning and, in particular, over the continuing uncertainty about its future. These problems had been identified in several previous attempts at restructuring the program, but had been acted upon only in a series of ad hoc changes in response to immediate circumstances.

The Committee approached its task open-mindedly, without preconceptions as to the final outcome. All previous documentation on the program was reviewed, a broadly-based process of consultation with the scholarly community was carried out, and the views of staff and management sought. An effort was made to avoid extreme solutions where moderate ones would suffice. Also, the Committee was concerned to ensure that certain basic principles, such as peer review and the freedom to submit proposals in any area of investigation, would be maintained. It was recognized from the outset that no set of proposals for change would meet universal approval. It was also recognized that Council, in making its decisions, would need to be aware of the likely reception of the proposals in the community, but that this would be only one of the considerations which could affect the final decisions.

This report has presented a series of proposals aimed at a substantial restructuring of the program without altering its essential characteristics. These proposals have been adopted by Council and must be interpreted as a revised set of policies and procedures for the program. In some cases, the details of implementation and the specific regulations which follow from the recommendations remain to be worked out. Nevertheless, the framework within which such work is to be conducted has now been presented.

In perusing the report, the reader may feel that the problem has been approached in a somewhat episodic manner, as each issue has been discussed separately. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify several general thrusts in the report. In this concluding chapter, these are discussed briefly, in the hope that this will add an element of coherence to the report. The major thrusts may be stated as follows:

1. Clarifying and narrowing the objectives of the program to ensure that emphasis is placed on support of independent research of high quality, initiated by scholars and judged by their peers.
2. Preserving the integrity of peer review, while changing form, in recognition of constraints on resources to administer the peer review system, and to allow some reallocation of resources to other tasks, especially follow-up and evaluation.

3. Allowing greater flexibility in a number of areas, especially in the degree to which adjudication committees can take account of the characteristics of their disciplines, and in the use of funds by grant holders.
4. Placing greater emphasis on the productivity of the program through follow-up and evaluation activities.
5. Allowing for a longer term perspective on research projects to reduce the need for repeat applications and to give greater stability to those engaged in ongoing research.
6. Reinstating the practice of providing support for the time of researchers, under modified conditions.
7. Continuing to allow sabbaticants -- who will not be eligible for Council research time support during their sabbatical year -- to apply in the regular Research Grants program for research costs incurred during the sabbatical year.
8. Modifying certain operational procedures to increase efficiency and flexibility and to permit prompt response to enquiries.

In examining the question of objectives, the Committee found that a number of different objectives could be inferred from previous Council discussion and from the contents of the Guide for Applicants and the adjudication procedures. It was felt that this was somewhat confusing, and that the program should not be expected to have such functions as dissemination and training as major objectives, although these might be valuable adjuncts to the major purpose of the program. It was concluded that the program should have the single broad objective of supporting independent research, with due regard not only for the quality of the project, as judged by the applicant's peers, but also for the applicant's research record.

Following from the last point, the Committee felt that it was desirable to reaffirm the principle of peer assessment and adjudication, since many scholars seem to have perceived that this principle would be placed in jeopardy by attempts to improve efficiency. Having done this, it was necessary to propose some modifications to the manner in which such assessment would be conducted, since resource constraints would obviously prevent the maintenance of the existing system. These modifications are in the direction of having committees assume greater responsibility for both assessor selection and the preparation of assessments, thus reducing the staff workload involved in this task and ensuring that the activity comes under greater academic control.

A number of submissions to the Committee made the point that the support requirements and the nature of research proposals vary from one discipline to another. At the same time, it is obviously not feasible to have separate regulations for different disciplines. Accordingly, the Committee

proposed that adjudication committees be given sufficient scope to allow for the characteristics of a particular discipline and that grant applicants be advised to prepare proposals in accordance with the practices and conventions within the discipline, rather than in some standard form which might not be appropriate to some disciplines.

There are at least three aspects to the question of follow-up and productivity. First, it is necessary to have a system in place for dealing with routine matters of submission of reports, payment of grant installments, responding to enquiries and the like. A number of proposals were made on these matters. Second, information on how a scholar has used previous grants is an important ingredient in the assessment of any subsequent request for support. Although attempts are made to inform adjudication committees of a scholar's past grant history, this has not been a requirement. It was therefore proposed that this be formalized, that former grant holders be required to submit the necessary evidence, and that the record-keeping system be designed to identify the outcomes of previous research supported by the program. Finally, one of the major problems in defending the use of public funds in support of independent research is that insufficient evidence is available on the scope and outcomes of such research. The absence of such evidence also inhibits attempts at evaluation. The Committee therefore recommended that this problem be addressed at the staff level and that resources be allocated to the development of an evaluative system.

While there is considerable support in the scholarly community for an emphasis on short-term rather than long-term research, some research is obviously of an ongoing nature and requires some assurance of stability of support. Also, there is a need for support of some large-scale research. However, such projects should be treated somewhat differently from others to ensure that their presence does not distort the regular adjudication process or the funding envelopes allocated to committees. On a more practical level, the need to submit repeat applications for the same ongoing project is frustrating for applicants and places an unnecessary burden on the system.

In light of the opposing views, the Committee did not feel justified in recommending substantially greater emphasis on long-term research, proposing, instead, that this be a matter of judgment within adjudication committees. Nevertheless, it was thought necessary to make recommendations which would reduce the need for repeat applications. As for large-scale projects, it was felt that these should be integrated somewhat more into the adjudication process than is now the case, in order to avoid delays in approval, but that there should continue to be a separate allocation of funds for such projects.

The need for some support of the time of principal investigators was made clear in a number of submissions. Some, in fact, went as far as to suggest that the present system is biased in favour of relatively routine research which can be done by assistants, as the salaries of assistants are allowed while those of principal investigators are not. At the same time, there was consensus that the previous system of research time stipends was too generous in allowing for researchers' salaries rather than the cost of replacements for teaching. The Committee therefore concluded that the reinstatement of a modified form of research time stipend is justified.

In deliberating on this issue, it soon became obvious that support of research time is intimately linked to the Leave Fellowships Program. This resulted in some of the most intense debate in the Committee, and to recommendations which are expected to be quite controversial. Since research time is available, as a matter of course, during regular sabbatical leaves, it was concluded that Council's contribution to support of sabbaticals is marginal in terms of stimulating research. A much greater effect could be achieved by awarding support to replace teaching time. For some scholars, it would obviously be advantageous to combine such support with a sabbatical leave to give two consecutive years of research time.

Aside from this, the Leave Fellowships Program is unique among the programs of this and other Councils, in providing funds to augment the salaries of researchers who already hold regular university appointments. Although, in most universities, there is some loss of income during a sabbatical leave, this loss can be offset, for those engaged in research, by the tax advantages of taking a research grant in lieu of part of the individual's salary from the university. Leave fellowships thus provide funds which are available in other ways. Finally, certain of the provisions of leave fellowships are substantially more generous than those for research grants. It is difficult to justify such provisions at a time of financial restraint.

It was therefore concluded that, despite its obvious popularity, a separate program of leave fellowships cannot be sustained under present circumstances, and that this program should be integrated with the Research Grants program. Sabbaticants should be eligible to apply for research grants. Any additional research time required at any time other than during sabbatical leave could also be supported as part of a research grant, on the basis of teaching replacement.

The Committee was asked to examine the General Research Grants (GRG) program following submission of an evaluation report on that program and a staff paper proposing certain changes. The Committee's conclusion was that GRGs should be treated as an extension of the Research Grants program to the lower end of the funding spectrum, and that the program should continue to be used as a vehicle for removing from the latter program applications which would be uneconomical to process. More important, it became clear some additional provision is needed for researchers requiring modest levels of support, greater than now provided by GRGs. The Research Grants program does not attract applications from scholars seeking such support, even though it has been argued by many that there is considerable demand at the lower levels.

Accordingly, the Committee concluded that modifications should be made to the GRG program to reduce the discontinuity that now exists between the current GRG maximum of \$2,500 and the amounts that applicants find it worth requesting under the regular Research Grants program. Increases in both the maximum allowable individual grant and the total budget for the GRG program have therefore been proposed. Also, it has been proposed that the program revert to a version of the earlier formula whereby the size of the GRG for a particular university is related to that university's granting record under the Research Grants program, subject to a base amount.

Among major changes proposed in operational procedures are: the introduction of a single annual competition; the use of a reserve pool of funds to allow flexibility in success rates across disciplines, as determined by the quality of applications in a particular competition, limits on the length of project descriptions; suggestions for increasing flexibility in staff use; increased discretion allowed grantees in the use of funds; removal of fixed limits on expenditures in favour of the use of university rates; and improvements in procedures for responding to enquiries. Taken together, these proposals are intended to make the system simpler and more flexible for applicants, grantees, staff and adjudication committees.

A few final comments are necessary on implementation. The Council's management will be responsible for promulgating the new principles and for scheduling the transition to the new procedures. It can be stated here and now that the last research grants adjudication to be held under the existing rules will be that of March 1986, for which the deadline is October 15, 1985. After March 1986 the new research grants procedures will come into force; the deadline for the following competition will be set at October 15, 1986, and the adjudication, including decisions, will be completed by March 31, 1987.

Since there will be no adjudication in October 1986, applicants who would otherwise have presented their requests for consideration at that time are invited to present them for the adjudication of March 1986 (deadline: October 15, 1985).

Furthermore, potential leave fellowship applicants are advised that the last leave fellowship competition will be held in 1985 (deadline October 1); they will wish to take account of this in making their plans.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT THE EXISTING PRINCIPLE OF "ESSENTIAL FUNDING UNDER COMPETITIVE ADJUDICATION" BE MAINTAINED IN PREFERENCE TO A SYSTEM OF PARTIAL FUNDING.

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT TWO ASSESSMENTS NORMALLY BE OBTAINED FOR EACH FILE, WITH ONE ASSESSOR BEING A COMMITTEE MEMBER AND ONE BEING EXTERNAL. A LARGER NUMBER OF ASSESSMENTS WOULD BE SOUGHT FOR CASES JUDGED TO PRESENT EXCEPTIONAL DIFFICULTY AND FOR APPLICATIONS FOR MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS.

RECOMMENDATION 3

THAT BOTH THE COMMITTEE AND THE EXTERNAL ASSESSOR BE CHOSEN BY THE CHAIR OF THE APPROPRIATE ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE, IN CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL STAFF, AS APPROPRIATE.

RECOMMENDATION 4

THAT THE PRACTICE OF SENDING ASSESSORS' REPORTS TO APPLICANTS BE DISCONTINUED AND REPLACED (IN THE CASE OF REFUSALS, CONDITIONAL AWARDS, OR AWARDS WITH SUBSTANTIAL BUDGET REDUCTIONS) BY A COMMITTEE REPORT EXPLAINING THE DECISION.

RECOMMENDATION 5

THAT THE REQUIREMENT FOR SUBMISSION OF SIX COPIES OF THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND EIGHT COPIES OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS BE SUBJECT TO A STAFF REVIEW, WITH A VIEW TO REDUCING THIS REQUIREMENT.

RECOMMENDATION 6

THAT APPLICATIONS BE JUDGED IN A BALANCED MANNER, WITH DUE REGARD NOT ONLY FOR THE QUALITY OF THE PROJECT BUT ALSO FOR THE RESEARCH RECORD OF THE APPLICANT.

RECOMMENDATION 7

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRACTICES, METHODS, AND STANDARDS OF THEIR PARTICULAR DISCIPLINES IN SUCH MATTERS AS PERSON/PROJECT EMPHASIS, FUNDING OF SMALL VERSUS LARGE SCALE RESEARCH, PROVISIONS FOR BEGINNING SCHOLARS, AND, MOST IMPORTANT, THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION REQUIRED.

RECOMMENDATION 8

THAT THE GUIDE TO APPLICANTS REFER TO THE PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED PRACTICES WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE OF THE APPLICANT AND TO THE RELATIVE AUTONOMY OF ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES IN DETERMINING THE STANDARDS FOR PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS AND RELATED MATTERS.

RECOMMENDATION 9

THAT THE ACADEMIC ADVISORY PANEL BE REQUESTED TO EXAMINE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES WHICH ARISE FROM RESEARCH GRANT ADJUDICATIONS, AND ADVISE MANAGEMENT ACCORDINGLY.

RECOMMENDATION 10

THAT COUNCIL BE OPEN TO APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS OF RESEARCH OF ANY DURATION, AS DETERMINED BY THE REQUIREMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR DISCIPLINE.

RECOMMENDATION 11

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES BE REQUESTED TO ALLOCATE A PROPORTION OF THEIR BUDGET ENVELOPES TO LONG TERM RESEARCH, THIS PROPORTION TO BE DETERMINED BY EACH COMMITTEE ON THE BASIS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLINE.

RECOMMENDATION 12

THAT GRANTS BE AWARDED FOR UP TO FIVE YEARS, ON THE BASIS OF THE MERITS OF SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR LONG-TERM FUNDING.

RECOMMENDATION 13

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES MAKE DECISIONS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, REPEAT APPLICATIONS FOR THE SAME PROJECT WITHIN A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD.

RECOMMENDATION 14

THAT MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS, WITH A MINIMUM BUDGET OF \$100,000 FOR ONE YEAR, \$250,000 FOR THREE YEARS OR \$400,000 FOR FIVE YEARS, BE CONTINUED AS A CATEGORY OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 15

THAT AWARDS FOR PERIODS UP TO FIVE YEARS BE MADE UNDER THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS CATEGORY, WITH A SPECIFIC STATEMENT TO THE APPLICANT THAT THERE IS NO FURTHER COMMITMENT TO FUNDING BEYOND THIS PERIOD.

RECOMMENDATION 16

THAT COMMITTEE CHAIRS HAVE DISCRETION AS TO THE NUMBER OF EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS TO BE SOUGHT FOR MAJOR RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATIONS, AND THAT COMMITTEES MAY SUGGEST TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT OTHER PROCEDURES WHICH THEY DEEM NECESSARY TO SECURE ADEQUATE ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION 17

THAT COMMITTEES HAVE THE POWER TO SHIFT INTO THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS CATEGORY APPLICATIONS WHICH ARE CLOSE TO THE MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS LIMITS, IN TERMS OF AMOUNTS REQUESTED.

RECOMMENDATION 18

THAT THE ADJUDICATION OF MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS NORMALLY BE COMPLETED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REGULAR ADJUDICATION SYSTEM.

RECOMMENDATION 19

THAT THE PRACTICE OF AWARDING SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH TIME BE REINSTATED, ON THE BASIS OF THE COST PER COURSE OF REPLACEMENT TEACHING, USING A STANDARD RATE TO AVOID PROBLEMS OF DIFFERING SALARY RATES AMONG THE UNIVERSITIES.

RECOMMENDATION 20

THAT LEAVE FELLOWSHIPS BE DISCONTINUED AS A SEPARATE CATEGORY OF AWARDS AND THAT FUNDS CURRENTLY ALLOCATED TO LEAVE FELLOWSHIPS BE ADDED TO THE BUDGET FOR THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 21

THAT SABBATICANTS WHO WISH TO APPLY FOR RESEARCH EXPENSES WHICH WILL BE INCURRED DURING THEIR SABBATICAL LEAVE BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO UNDER THE RULES OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 22

THAT SUPPORT OF RESEARCH TIME, AS INDICATED IN RECOMMENDATION 19, BE CONSIDERED AS COMPLEMENTARY TO SABBATICAL LEAVE PROVISIONS OF UNIVERSITIES. THIS COULD ALLOW A SCHOLAR TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF RESEARCH TIME WHERE APPROPRIATE.

RECOMMENDATION 23

THAT THE UPPER LIMIT ON AWARDS TO BE MADE BY UNIVERSITIES UNDER THE GRG PROGRAM BE INCREASED TO \$5,000, AND THAT THIS AMOUNT BE SUBJECT TO PERIODIC REVIEW.

RECOMMENDATION 24

THAT APPLICATIONS FOR AMOUNTS UNDER \$5,000 NO LONGER BE ACCEPTED UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 25

THAT THE TOTAL CURRENT BUDGET FOR GRG'S BE INCREASED BY APPROXIMATELY \$1 MILLION PER YEAR.

RECOMMENDATION 26

THAT THE CONDITION FOR AWARD OF THE GRG IS THAT FUNDS BE USED TO FULFILL THE SAME BROAD OBJECTIVE AS THAT OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM.

RECOMMENDATION 27

THAT THE AMOUNT OF THE GRG AWARD TO A PARTICULAR UNIVERSITY CONSIST OF A BASE AMOUNT PLUS A FIXED PROPORTION OF THE AVERAGE AMOUNT AWARDED THAT UNIVERSITY UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM DURING THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS.

RECOMMENDATION 28

THAT ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES BE ENJOINED TO GIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO FIRST-TIME APPLICATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM SCHOLARS AT THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREERS. IN PARTICULAR, COMMITTEES SHOULD ENSURE THAT THEIR CONSIDERATION OF SCHOLARLY TRACK RECORD DOES NOT RESULT IN A BIAS AGAINST SUCH APPLICANTS.

RECOMMENDATION 29

THAT THE POLICY OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION BE TO RESPOND EXPEDITIOUSLY TO ENQUIRIES ON MATTERS OF BUDGET TRANSFERS, CHANGES IN RESEARCH PLANS, AND OTHER MATTERS NOT REQUIRING REFERRAL TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 30

THAT ALL DUTIES ASSOCIATED WITH RESPONSE TO ENQUIRIES FROM AWARD HOLDERS, CURRENT APPLICANTS, AND PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS BE ASSUMED BY THE APPROPRIATE RESEARCH GRANTS OFFICER.

RECOMMENDATION 31

THAT APPLICANTS WHO HAVE HELD PREVIOUS GRANTS BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE OF THEIR USE OF SUCH AWARDS.

RECOMMENDATION 32

THAT THE RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEM BE DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY THE RESULTS OF PREVIOUS GRANTS, AND THAT THIS BECOME PART OF THE DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 33

THAT THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED UNDER ANY PREVIOUS COUNCIL GRANTS BE AN EXPLICIT CRITERION FOR JUDGING CURRENT APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS.

RECOMMENDATION 34

THAT A SYSTEMATIC PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCEDURE, WITH EMPHASIS ON GATHERING AND INTERPRETING DATA ON PRODUCTIVITY OF SCHOLARS SUPPORTED UNDER THE RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM, BE DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY THE RESEARCH GRANTS AND POLICY AND PLANNING DIVISIONS, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE AUDIT AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE, AND THAT RESEARCH GRANTS OFFICERS ASSUME PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR DATA COLLECTION, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.

RECOMMENDATION 35

THAT APPEALS BASED ON FAILURE TO FOLLOW PROPER PROCEDURE IN PROCESSING AN APPLICATION BE INVESTIGATED, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION, WHO WOULD CONSULT THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE CHAIR AS NECESSARY.

RECOMMENDATION 36

BECAUSE OF THE COMPETITIVE NATURE OF THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS NO APPEALS ARE POSSIBLE ON SUBSTANTIVE GROUNDS. APPLICANTS WHO RECEIVE AN UNFAVOURABLE DECISION MAY RESUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS AT THE NEXT COMPETITION, WITH REVISIONS AS APPROPRIATE. SUCH APPLICATIONS WILL BE ADJUDICATED IN THE NORMAL WAY.

RECOMMENDATION 37

THAT FUNDS CONTINUE TO BE ALLOCATED TO COMMITTEES ON THE BASIS OF DEMAND, BUT THAT A SMALL RESERVE POOL OF FUNDS BE RETAINED FOR REALLOCATION AS A COMPETITION PROCEEDS AND FOR SUPPORT OF PROJECTS PLACED ON A SUPPLEMENTARY LIST BY THE ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES.

RECOMMENDATION 38

THAT THE SIZE OF THE ENVELOPE FOR EACH COMMITTEE BE BASED ON A MOVING AVERAGE OF TOTAL DOLLAR DEMAND WITHIN THE COMMITTEE OVER THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS.

RECOMMENDATION 39

THAT THERE BE A SINGLE ANNUAL COMPETITION FOR RESEARCH GRANTS, WITH AN APPLICATION DEADLINE OF OCTOBER 15 AND WITH DECISIONS TO BE RENDERED BY MARCH 31.

RECOMMENDATION 40

THAT ALL ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS BE SCHEDULED FOR THE SAME TIME.

RECOMMENDATION 41

THAT STAFF BE REDEPLOYED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT PERSONNEL ARE NOT ASSIGNED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE RESEARCH GRANTS DIVISION BUT ARE AVAILABLE FOR OTHER ASSIGNMENTS.

RECOMMENDATION 42

THAT MANAGEMENT CONSIDER THE COORDINATION OF ADJUDICATION SCHEDULES IN ALL PROGRAMS TO ACHIEVE AN OVERALL BALANCE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, AND THAT STAFF BE ASSIGNED AS NECESSARY TO ACCOMMODATE PEAK WORKLOADS IN A DIVISION AND TO SHORTEN TURNAROUND TIMES FOR APPLICATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION 43

THAT GRANT HOLDERS BE GIVEN DISCRETION TO TRANSFER FUNDS FROM ONE BUDGET CATEGORY TO ANOTHER, WITHIN OVERALL REGULATIONS ON ALLOWABLE EXPENSES, PROVIDED THAT THIS ENTAILS NO MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES.

RECOMMENDATION 44

THAT PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN RESEARCH PLANS BE REFERRED TO ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES FOR DECISION, WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRS HAVING DISCRETION TO CONFER WITH OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS AS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE CASES ARISING BETWEEN REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

RECOMMENDATION 45

THAT THE CURRENT REGULATIONS ON ALLOWABLE RATES FOR VARIOUS RESEARCH EXPENSES BE REMOVED AND REPLACED BY A STATEMENT THAT GRANT HOLDERS MUST CONFORM TO THE EXPENDITURE REGULATIONS OF THEIR OWN UNIVERSITIES. UNIVERSITIES WOULD BE EXPECTED TO CERTIFY THAT THIS WAS SO IN THEIR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL.

RECOMMENDATION 46

THAT THE CURRENT POLICY OF NOT ALLOWING COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO APPLY FOR GRANTS BE MAINTAINED.

RECOMMENDATION 47

THAT APPLICATIONS INVOLVING PROJECTS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE, OR OTHER PROJECTS WHICH CANNOT BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED WITH A SPECIFIC COMMITTEE, BE ADJUDICATED THROUGH INTER-COMMITTEE COORDINATION DURING REGULAR ADJUDICATION MEETINGS.

RECOMMENDATION 48

THAT PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS NORMALLY NOT EXCEED 3,000 WORDS.

